



ELEMENTS

OF

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

BY

THEODRIC ROMEYN BECK, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF THE INSTITUTES OF MEDICINE, AND LECTURER ON MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE
IN THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT
OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK, etc. etc.

AND

JOHN B. BECK, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA AND MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE IN THE COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, NEW-YORK; ONE OF THE PHYSICIANS
TO THE NEW-YORK HOSPITAL, etc. etc.

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ERRATA.

The following are all the important errata that have been noticed; a few additional verbal ones will be readily corrected by the reader.

VOL. I.

- Page 177, line 25, insert the comma after *diseases*, and dele after *blood*.
180, line 8, insert *that* after *recollect*.
290, line 20, for *encourage* read *discourage*.
332, line 15, for *cen* read *centre*.
339, line 25, for *it* read *life*.
400, line 27, insert *almost* before *invariably*.
415, line 7 from the bottom, for *variosus* read *venosus*.
579, line 3, for *and* read *who*.
616, Notes, line 1, for *Crawford* read *Mitchell*.
636, line 30, for 1820 read 1826.

VOL. II.

- Page 40, line 3, insert *sudden* before *death*.
122, line 18, for *erections* read *erection*.
123, lines 29 and 33, for *setting* read *sitting*.
181, line 36, for *eight* read *eighth*.
273, Note, line 1, for p. 19 read p. 18.
320, line 1, for *Bolard* read *Balard*.
501, line 5, for *local* read *general*.
523, line 25, read *morphine, its alkaloid*;
535, line 32, for *sulphuret* read *sulphate*.
557, line 8, for *Thurmer* read *Turner*.
647, line 15, for *presented* read *prevented*.

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

CHAPTER XIV.

PERSONS FOUND DEAD.

Duties of the office of coroner—imperfect manner in which it is often executed—duties of medical witnesses. Frequency of sudden death independent of violence.

1. MEDICO-LEGAL DISSECTION. Preliminary directions. Examination of external lesions—of the head—spine—thorax and abdomen. Distinction between natural appearances and the effects of violence. Hemorrhage—fluidity of the blood—ecchymosis—effect of blows on the dead body—sanguineous congestions—wounds—pseudo-morbid appearances. Examination of the skeleton—cases. Whether the hair grows after death. Changes induced by putrefaction. Observations of Orfila on this—not to prevent medico-legal dissection.
2. OF SUDDEN DEATH FROM NATURAL CAUSES. From apoplexy—rupture of aneurisms or cysts—affections of the heart—hemorrhage—idiopathic asphyxia. Christison's remarks on latent diseases—directions for discriminating.
3. OF DEATH FROM VIOLENT CAUSES. Explanation of the term *asphyxia*—anatomical changes that accompany it. Whether death arises from suicide. A. OF PERSONS DEAD FROM COLD. Its effects—appearances on dissection. Death from drinking cold water, and its probable cause. B. OF PERSONS DEAD FROM HUNGER. Appearances on dissection in man and animals. C. OF PERSONS DEAD FROM LIGHTNING. Appearances. D. OF PERSONS FOUND BURN'T TO DEATH. Effects of burns on the dead and living body. Præternatural combustibility of the human body—cases—theories to explain it. E. OF PERSONS DEAD FROM WOUNDS. Meaning of the word *wound* in legal medicine. Whether the wounds are the result of suicide, accident or homicide. Wounds from fire-arms—cases. Examination of the skeleton—cases in which murder was detected. Chemical investigations to ascertain the peculiarities in the blood of man and other animals. F. OF PERSONS DEAD FROM NOXIOUS INHALATIONS. 1. Carbonic acid gas—modes in which it may be generated—symptoms and effects—appearances on dissection. 2. Sulphuretted hydrogen—effects—appearances on dissection. G. OF PERSONS FOUND HUNG. Modes in which death occurs. Signs of strangulation by hanging—notice of the value of each—appearances on dissection. Whether the person found hung, has been suspended before or after death—cases. Whether the hanging is the result of suicide, accident or homicide—cases. H. OF PERSONS FOUND STRANGLERED. Whether this has been actually the cause of death—cases—appearances on dissection. Of manual strangulation. Whether the strangulation is the effect of suicide, accident or homicide—cases. Strangulation detected long after death. J. OF PERSONS FOUND SMOTHERED. Infants by accident—adults by accident, homicide or suicide—cases. K. OF PERSONS FOUND DROWNED. Modes in which death is produced. Signs that distinguish death previous to submersion, from death after it—examination of the relative importance of each sign. Effects of immersion on the dead body—its floating—formation of adipocere—progress of putrefaction at various periods—cases. Whether the drowning was the effect of suicide, accident or homicide—cases.

DEATH, even when it is the consequence of disease, is often an unexpected event. But if an individual expire under his own roof, surrounded by friends and relatives, we are disposed to consider it as an ordinary dispensation of Providence, and one to which all of us are sooner or later doomed. The features of the case differ materially, when a person is found dead on the highway, on the banks of a river, or in a lonely place. Indeed, if he be discovered to have paid the last debt of mortality, either in a sudden manner, or at a distance from his home, the laws of civilized society demand an investigation of the cause, and over this investigation, the officer called a coroner, is appointed to preside.

It will readily be observed from the above remarks, that the office in question is an important one. The duty of the coroner extends to an examination of the circumstances connected with every case of sudden or suspicious death, and he is to make this with the aid of a jury, summoned by him for the purpose. Future proceedings are regulated by the verdict that they may pronounce.

That the duties of this office are imperfectly understood, and often most negligently performed, hardly admits of a doubt. The individuals appointed are frequently unfit for the situation, both from habits and education, while the jury are too commonly desirous of hurrying through the investigation. It has been proposed to remedy the first difficulty, by selecting coroners from among medical men, and there is no doubt that the administration of criminal justice might be promoted thereby.* Every inquest involves a medical question, and even although the case may at the first glance appear so clear, and the facts so certain, as hardly to need a professional examination, yet before the trial is ended, there will often be extreme regret, that a medico-legal dissection had not been pursued.

The medical witness has, however, several obstacles and discouragements to encounter in the performance of his duty. The power of the coroner and his jury to stop him in the pro-

* In England considerable efforts have been made of late to procure the election of medical coroners.

gress of his examination seems unquestioned, at least it is constantly exercised, in spite of his remonstrances. "On a late occasion, one of these grave bodies declared that they would apply to the governors of a London hospital to put a stop to unnecessary dissections, and in many cases they have told an inspecting surgeon to stop in the midst of his work, *because they themselves were satisfied.*"*

Again, no compensation is allowed to the surgeon for the dissection, nor to the chemist for his analysis, while he incurs at the same time the high responsibility of deciding on the guilt or innocence of the accused. Certainly, no plan could be suggested more effectually to deter all and every medical man from engaging in these thankless investigations.† In my remarks on medical evidence, I shall offer some suggestions for improving this very imperfect portion of our criminal code. At present, conceding that the physician or surgeon is obliged to attend, when summoned, at these inquests, I will offer for his consideration some preliminary cautions.

The first is, not to permit sudden prejudice to warp his mind. There is nothing more common among the populace, who crowd around the bodies of persons found dead, than to suspect that they have been murdered, and the idea, instead of being judiciously combatted, if untrue, is permitted to gain strength by repetition. Against charges of this nature, the physician should always be prepared, and never allow them to have any influence over him. He should proceed to the examination of the body with a mind free from prejudice. He should also recollect, that sudden death is not an uncommon event, and that those who, at one moment, we see before us in the full enjoyment of life, may, at the next, be cold and

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 190.

† "On a trial of an indictment for manslaughter, the surgeon will only be allowed for his attendance on the trial, and not for his fee for opening the body by order of the coroner." 5 Carrington and Payne, p. 301. *Rex v. Taylor*. Our Revised Statutes of New-York, (vol. 2, p. 742,) declare, that "it shall be the duty of the coroner to cause some surgeon or physician to be subpoenaed to appear as a witness upon the taking of an inquest," but does not notice the compensation.

In France, the judicial officers, or those of the police are expressly ordered to subpoena medical men, to make the necessary examinations, in all cases of violent death, or where the cause of sudden decease is unknown. If circumstances render a disinterment necessary, the police officers must be assisted in that duty by a physician or surgeon. (Code D'Instruction Criminelle, articles 44 and 81.)

inanimate. The secret, operating causes of this change may remain unknown to us, and we can perceive only its effects. In addition to this, there are many circumstances which may be the origin of the sudden decease, and to which the person affected has been for a time exposed, without any knowledge of their consequences. Of this nature, are the breathing of noxious gases, the use of improper aliments, or of unhealthy water. The passions, also, if highly excited, or a purely accidental cause may respectively have induced the sudden death. And lastly, the destruction of life may have been caused by the person himself. All these *possible* circumstances should be recollected, before a case of this kind is referred to a criminal court, on the decision of a physician. The importance of medico-legal dissection is thus inculcated, not only by every sentiment of professional pride, but even by the dictates of common humanity. It is but a sorry excuse, after a suspected individual has lain for months in a jail, on the strength of his opinion, then to come into court and say, that he drew wrong inferences from external appearances, or on the other hand, to meet a brother practitioner, who invalidates his opinion, and demonstrates the crudeness and insufficiency of his investigations.

In further noticing this subject, I shall consider it under the following general divisions.

1. Of MEDICO-LEGAL DISSECTION.
2. Of DEATH FROM NATURAL CAUSES.
3. Of DEATH FROM VIOLENT CAUSES.

The subject of wounds generally, and of poisons, would probably, in perfect strictness, belong to the present title, but as they are very extensive and important in their nature, I prefer considering them in distinct chapters, and this separation will also allow us to notice their effects on the living body.*

I. *Of medico-legal dissection.*

Under this head, I propose to give general rules only for the examination of dead bodies, applicable to all the cases that

* I am obliged, from want of space, to omit a notice of the signs of real and apparent death. Should I ever publish my proposed work, on Medical Police, it will receive an equally appropriate place.

may be supposed to occur. Every species of violent death requires an investigation peculiar, in some degree, to itself, and the minutiae of this will be more profitably noticed in succeeding sections and chapters.* I am also to suppose the reader acquainted with ordinary anatomical dissection, and hence may be allowed to omit many things contained in elementary treatises on the science.

Before proceeding to the dissection, and particularly if called before the body is removed from the place where it was found, it is proper to notice its situation and attitude, the state of the clothes, and the condition of the ground, whether it bears the marks of footsteps, and their direction. We should remark also, whether there are any indications of struggling, or any weapons left in the vicinity.† In our first general survey of the body, the following rules may be observed. 1. If death be apparently caused by a wound, the body should be first viewed, if possible, exactly in the position in which it was found. By moving it, the attitude of the extremities may be altered, or the state of a fracture or a luxation changed, since the internal parts vary in their position with one another, according to the general position of the body. If it is absolutely necessary to remove it, it should be done with great caution. 2. The clothes should be removed, as far as is necessary, and it should be noted what compresses or bandages (if any) are

* The following are the principal authorities on this subject, Marc's Translation of Rose's Manual. Mauchartius' Dissertation in Schlegel, vol. 1, and which indeed anticipates the former in many respects. Chaussier on Medico-Legal Dissection and on Ecchymosis, &c. These two dissertations, which occupy the greater part of his "Recueil de Memoires," were given, as he states, the one to Dr. Renard, and the other to Dr. Rieux, for their respective inaugural dissertations, and by referring to the catalogue, it will be seen that they have been published by those gentlemen. Foderé, vol. 3, chap. 1. Mahon, vol. 2, p. 217. Dease's Remarks on Medical Jurisprudence. Paris's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 3. Dr. John Gordon, in Art. *Anatomy*, Supplement of Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 1.

† A few illustrations will serve to show the importance of attending to these circumstances. Mr. Jeffries was murdered at Walthamstow, in England, in 1751, by his niece and a servant. Here the perpetrators were suspected to be domestics, from the single circumstance of the dew on the grass surrounding the house not having been disturbed on the morning of the murder, which must have happened, had the murderer left the premises. Mr. Taylor, of Hornsey, was murdered in December, 1818, and his body thrown into the river. No investigation was needed to ascertain whether he had gone alive into the water, as the hands were found clenched and contained grass, which, in his struggle, he had torn from the bank. Again, the marks of footsteps measured and found to correspond with the shoes of the suspected person, have, in more than one instance, led to the detection of the guilty. (Paris, vol. 3, p. 38, 41.)

applied to particular parts. 3. After these preliminaries, we must examine the colour of the skin, the temperature of the body, the rigidity or flexibility of the extremities, the state of the eyes, and of the sphincter muscles, noting at the same time whatever swelling, ecchymosis, wound, ulcer, contusion, fracture or luxation, may be present; also any fluid flowing from the nose, mouth, ears, sexual organs, &c., and indeed every thing varying from the natural state. The above cavities should be inspected, and particular attention must be paid to the state of the skin, so as not to mistake that bluish-brown tinge which indicates the commencement of putrefaction, for ecchymosis. The distinction between these we shall presently explain.

From the period when the dissector commences, until he concludes, there should be a clerk at hand to take down all the facts he may from time to time communicate, and this should not be delayed until the examination is completed, as many circumstances of importance may then have escaped his memory.

If there be an external lesion present, it should first be examined, and its nature described—its length, breadth and depth—also whether it has been inflicted with a cutting, pointed, or round instrument—whether it is accompanied with inflammation or gangrene, and whether any foreign bodies are found in it, such as balls, or pieces of cloth. The scalpel should then be employed to trace its extent, but with judgment, so as not to render our researches useless, and to prevent a comparison of the external wound with the internal injury. The nerves and bloodvessels, and particularly the arteries that are wounded, should be named, as should also the viscera, if any are in that state. *If there be a contusion without a solution of continuity*, the injury found in the internal parts should be particularly noticed, such as extravasation, rupture of vessels, &c. *If the cause of death is a burn*, its degree and extent should be examined, together with the state of the parts affected, whether inflamed merely, or covered with blisters—the fluid contained in these blisters, and the condition of the neighbouring parts, whether sphacelated or gangrenous. *If a luxation or*

fracture be present, notice the surrounding soft parts—the nature of the injury, whether simple or complicated, and the phenomena indicating the progress of disease or of recovery.

Having stated all these circumstances, it is next necessary to proceed to the dissection in a systematic manner, and the common rule is, to commence with the examination of the abdomen. Chaussier, however, dissuades from this, and advises that it be the last, as putrefaction is there first developed and the offensive odour may be in a great measure avoided, by previously noticing the other parts. In all our examinations, care must be taken, not “to *make wounds while we are examining for them*,” and we must not desist because we suppose that the cause of death is perfectly discovered in one or the other cavity; all of them should be inspected.

On viewing the head, the integuments, and all injuries done to them, are first to be noticed. In particular, if a wound appear to be inflicted by a sharp-pointed instrument, its depth, direction and connexion with the brain, should be minutely traced. The presence of inflammation, œdema or sphacelus, must also be remarked. These observations apply also to injuries from cutting instruments. And in all of these examinations, the hair should be previously removed either by cutting or with a razor. We next proceed to lay the bones of the cranium bare. This is done by an incision from one ear to the other over the top of the head, and then another transverse to it, from the top of the nose to the occiput. On dissecting these flaps, we shall be able to discover whether any injury has been done to the hard parts. Search is to be made, if there be any fractures or fissures, taking care at the same time not to mistake irregular sutures for them; and for this purpose, they should be rubbed over with ink. The strength of these bones is also deserving of minute inspection, as they are not unfrequently so thin or soft as to render a blow, that under ordinary circumstances would only produce slight injury, very destructive. The fracture should always be followed throughout its whole extent.

The skull cap may now be removed; and this requires to be done with extreme caution, lest we wound the dura mater.

Dr. Gordon advises that this should be done by sawing through the outer table, and then breaking through the inner with a chisel and mallet. On the other hand, Renard directs that four holes be made with the trephine at proper distances, and through these openings, the cranium separated from the meninges, with the handle of a delicate scalpel. The saw is then to be used in the direction of the trepannings, and the skull cap is readily raised and removed.

This, however, will not suffice in all cases, since many fractures occur in the occipital portions, and at the base of the brain. Here similar careful incisions are necessary with the proper application of the saw, to discover the extent of the injury.

The membranes and the substance of the brain must now be carefully inspected. Let it be noticed whether any pus or blood is interposed between the dura mater and the bones, or whether it is detached or inflamed. So also of the other membranes, and the brain itself. All morbid appearances in structure deserve attention; and the state of the bloodvessels, the quantity of fluids present, and their situation, are highly deserving of attention. It should, however, be remembered, that an extravasation or an injury is not unfrequently found on the side opposite to which the blow was given: And again, that death sometimes follows from blows on the head, when no internal lesion can be found on dissection. It has been abundantly proved, that the connexion between the brain and the viscera of the thorax and abdomen, is the cause of this, and the injury must in such instances be looked for in the latter.

There are several sources of fallacy in the examination of the brain, which will be presently noticed.

We should not neglect an examination of the base of the brain, since by this, fractures otherwise scarcely discoverable, have been found. I allude particularly to cases where injury has been inflicted through the orbits of the eyes.*

The vertebral column must be viewed through its whole extent, as to its being fractured, or dislocated, or contused.

* Paris, vol. 3, p. 51.

In any doubtful case, it requires strict attention, since injuries of it are often of a very complicated nature. Foderé quotes a case from Jaeger, of a person who was struck on the neck, by a loaded wagon, with such violence, that both his upper and lower extremities became paralytic. He died in eighteen hours after the accident. No external appearances of injury could be observed, although an examination readily indicated that the seat of the disease was somewhere near the sixth cervical vertebra, and accordingly, on dissection, its spinous apophysis was found broken at its base, and separated from its body, while blood was extravasated to the amount of four ounces. In such and similar cases, it may be expedient to remove the whole of the cervical column, and which may be done by sawing off the transverse processes, and raising it from its position. All indications of inflammation, or of a want of mobility should be duly considered.

In examining the neck, Chaussier and Gordon advise us, first, to make an incision from the chin to the sternum, then from the upper point, to cut along the margin of the lower jaw to its angle, and from the lower point towards the clavicle. By continuing the dissection, every part may thus be examined in succession. If necessary, the jaw may be removed by a saw.

We should inquire carefully, whether the neck bears any marks of external injury, or traces of ecchymosis, or pressure on it. Examine the great blood vessels, whether they are filled with blood or empty, and the nerves, whether they are in their natural state. The larynx, trachea, pharynx and œsophagus and their contents must be noticed in succession, removing or reverting the former when we have completed our investigation. If wounded, detail the extent, depth and shape of the injury, and particularly if the lesion is caused by fire arms; its course, also, and the loss of the substance, together with the inflammation or suppuration (if any) existing, should be stated.

On proceeding to the thorax, it should first be ascertained whether the injuries it has received are superficial, affecting the integuments and muscles merely, or whether they extend

to its cavity. This cannot be determined satisfactorily, without an inspection, and for this purpose "an incision is made through the integuments, from the top of the sternum to the pit of the stomach. The flaps are then to be dissected down to the ribs and backwards about an inch and a half beyond the junction of the cartilages with the osseous substance of the ribs. Cut through these cartilages close to their joining, beginning with the second rib and ending with the seventh. Pull forward the lower part of the sternum a little; introduce a scalpel behind it, and detach the diaphragm and mediastinum; then saw through it immediately below the connexion of the first rib. The cavity of the chest will thus be sufficiently exposed."

The viscera require very careful examination. The lungs and their internal as well as external condition, the pericardium and its contents, the heart and its great vessels, the thoracic duct, all should be inspected. Remove the blood with a sponge, so as to ascertain the exact degree of colour that is present in the various parts, and in particular, attention must be paid to the degree of consistence, or fluidity of the blood. The importance of these directions will be presently explained.

Lastly, as to the abdominal cavity; its external covering forms a subject of inquiry. Every spot, swelling, or extravasation should be noticed; as also whether hernia be present, and whether there is any tumefaction of the part. The mode of opening into the cavity, needs hardly to be detailed. A crucial incision may be made, and if this be not sufficient, the pubal bones on each side may be removed with the saw. The condition of the peritoneum then requires attention, and the presence or absence of fluid in the cavity. The organs peculiar to either sex should be examined, and also the various viscera contained here—the stomach, mesentery, liver, spleen, gall-bladder, intestines, bladder, &c. &c. We should view each part as to the quantity of blood which naturally belongs to it; trace all extravasations, as to their quantity and nature; and particularly inquire whether the changes observed are the result of disease, or of sudden injury. Professor Mahon recommends the use of a blunt-pointed bistoury in examining the intestines, as this may prevent injury during the dissection.

Although I shall have occasion hereafter to notice the subject in detail, I must not omit to remark, that if there be any suspicion of poisoning, the whole of the alimentary canal, from the œsophagus to the rectum, should be carefully removed for further inspection. Dr. Gordon's directions may be followed for this purpose. He advises that a double ligature be applied at the very commencement of the jejunum, and the intestine divided between the two threads; a similar ligature is then to be applied to the ileum, close to its termination in the colon, and the tube divided in the same manner. The root of the mesentery being now cut through, the whole jejunum and ileum are removed together. A double ligature is next to be applied to the rectum as low down as possible; and being divided between the cords, it is to be removed with the whole of the colon. The œsophagus, stomach and duodenum, are then to be extracted together, taking care previously to tie a ligature round the top of the œsophagus.

The mode of conducting the analysis of the contents of these parts, will find a place under the head of Poisons.*

The above remarks do not apply exclusively to the stomach. If any viscus appears to require a more strict investigation than can be given to it *in situ*, it should be removed from the body after the general dissection; and I may add, that it is often of extreme importance to preserve those parts, on the appearance of which our evidence is founded. Thus in cases of supposed poisoning, the stomach and duodenum may be preserved in alcohol, to meet any conflicting testimony, or to elucidate doubts; and Dr. Paris has well illustrated the value of this advice in its full extent, by referring to the preservation of the uterus in the case of Miss Burns.

Having completed the dissection, the notes should be taken and reduced to order; and in preparing the report, or in giving testimony, it should be as plain and simple as possible, avoiding all those terms which are unintelligible to a court and jury.

It is evident even from the brief notice that I have now

* How necessary it is to be very cleanly in these operations, is illustrated by the observation of Renard, (p. 116,) who states, that in one instance, the stomach was negligently laid on some fine white sand. At the subsequent examination, particles of this were found, and gave rise to an idea of poison by means of powdered glass.

given, how necessary an accurate knowledge of anatomy is in these doubtful cases, and how important it is not to mistake natural appearances for extraordinary occurrences, or the effects of disease or death for those of violence. The ignorant are ever ready to make mistakes on these points, and we should be prepared to encounter them. A notice of the more prominent will therefore form a proper commentary on what has been said, in order to establish such distinctions as may be applicable in these investigations.

Hæmorrhage is supposed by many to indicate the existence of the circulation when it commenced; and accordingly, they deem its occurrence as *prima facie* evidence that life was present when the supposed violence was offered. Such an opinion, however, if adopted universally, must lead to dangerous errors. It is frequently observed by anatomists, on opening the bodies of those dead from apoplexy, or various forms of protracted or malignant fevers, that blood flows from the mouth, nose or ears. In these instances, however, it is of a dark colour, and evidently more fluid than in the natural state. Again, blood often flows also from incisions on the dead body, on altering its position; and this has unquestionably, in many instances, given rise to the idea of its occurrence when the murderer approached. In our remarks on Persons dead from Wounds, some cases of this kind will be noticed.

Hæmorrhage, then, if observed on the dead body, is of itself no proof that a lesion has been inflicted on the living one; and in order to warrant an opinion of this kind, the large vessels should be found empty, and the blood of a florid red colour.

But hæmorrhage may be wanting, and on dissection, the blood is found fluid in the heart and its large vessels, the spinal canal, the lungs or the brain. *Is this to be deemed a proof of violent death?* I apprehend not. All that can be said is, that fluidity is most common in such cases, as from narcotic poisons, lightning and the like; but it is also observed in sudden death from ordinary causes, and particularly in apoplexy, and even is occasionally not wanting in the usual forms of disease that come under the examination of the anatomist.* The

* This question was agitated not long since in London, in consequence of the late

reason of this diversity we cannot explain, but the fact is undoubted. "Although vital effusions," says Professor Christison, "are usually coagulated, they are not so always." On the other hand, "where blood flows from a body after death, or where a wound has been made after death, the blood is never found in a state of coagulation."*

What I have now stated concerning blood and its effusion, will better enable us to discriminate between divers appearances that are frequently noticed on the dead body, and which are liable to be confounded. They have various names attached to them, according as they are supposed to originate from different causes; and with an explanation of these, I shall introduce this intricate but important point.

The term *contusion* is derived from the Latin word *contundere*, to bruise or pound; and hence conveys a similar meaning. *Ecchymosis* is a Greek term, and is equivalent to effusion or spreading of blood into the cellular tissue. It is present whenever the contusion is sufficiently violent to induce the rupture of a bloodvessel; and the natural result is, to communicate a colour more or less livid to the skin. When the quantity of blood is sufficiently large to produce a tumour or swelling of any magnitude, it is called a *thrombus*.

These various states are deemed to indicate the existence of life when they occurred. *Ecchymosis* is a sub-cutaneous hæmorrhage, generally arising from external causes, although

Mr. Brookes stating under oath, that he had never seen the blood fluid after death from a natural disease. The case which gave rise to this testimony, and the subsequent discussion concerning it in the London and Westminster Medical Societies, was that of an individual, who, after extreme intoxication, was found dead, and on dissection, a large quantity of fluid blood was observed in the brain and heart. It became a question whether strangulation or apoplexy had been the cause of death. The proofs in favour of the first were extremely slight, and only acquired importance in consequence of the above testimony. For an interesting discussion on this subject, between many of the most eminent men in London, see *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 4, p. 43, 34, 119. On the fluidity of the blood after death, see Elliotson's *Blumenbach*, p. 13; *Bostock's Physiology*, vol. 1, p. 354. And for cases of its occurrence after ordinary diseases, see *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 15, p. 186.

* *Paris*, vol. 3, p. 31. "It may not always be easy to distinguish internal hæmorrhage, according as it occurs before or after death." The most discriminating circumstances, according to Christison, whom I now quote, are the marks of compression on any organ within the cavity; the extent of the hæmorrhage; the coagulation of the blood; and particularly the rupture of an artery, with its correspondent effects. All these indicate that it has happened during life. (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 31, p. 250.)

it may also from strictly internal ones, as coughing, vomiting, efforts at stool, &c.; and its course is gradually to diminish in intensity of colour at its circumference, retaining the livid appearance longest at the centre. The shades produced by the gradual absorption of the blood are familiar to all medical men, and they serve to show the distinction between livid spots occasionally noticed during life, and which are uniform in colour throughout their whole extent.

If this then be recognized as the effects of injury, whether intentional or accidental, *during life*, it remains to designate the post mortem appearances that may be mistaken for it. For them the term *sugillation* has been proposed by Belloc and others, and although objected to by Chaussier, may serve in the place of a better. It is applied to those livid spots of various sizes which are noticed on the bodies of the dead, generally after they become stiff and cold. They are seen on depending parts, as the back and loins; but occur also on the neck, head and genitals. They are of a uniform colour, and according to Chaussier and Renard, consist in a *congestion of blood in the capillary tissue alone, and not extending to the subcutaneous*. This can be proved by cutting into them; and Dr. Paris proposes, as these discolourations are often mistaken for signs of violence, to prevent the possibility of dispute, "that a layer of the skin where such lividness is present, be removed, to show that it is confined to this organ, and is not attended with infiltration of blood into the cellular membrane."*

This livid appearance now described under the name of *sugillation*, is to be ascribed to the effects of gravitation. The blood obeys physical laws in the dead body, and hence it is found in the most depending situations, as the back of the body, and the posterior portion of the lungs. So well is this established, that if the body be reversed and placed with its face downward, the lividity will change places, and occupy the front part of the body. Dr. Beatty indeed states that he had seen the lividity already formed on the back, to disappear when the body was turned before it became cold.†

* Chaussier, p. 365 to 430. Belloc, p. 315. Rieux, p. 251. Renard, p. 36. Paris, vol. 3, p. 104. I have thought myself justified in somewhat varying the definition of *sugillation*, as given by Belloc.

† Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, vol. 3, p. 321, Art. *Persons found dead*.

It is an illustration of the acuteness of Zacchias, that he should propose, in the infancy of the science, the following as a discriminating mark between ecchymosis and sugillation: When the discolouration is the effect of external violence, a congestion of thick *concrete* blood will be found; but in the spontaneous spot, the blood, on incision, will be seen *fluid*.

We are not, however, to imagine that the blood in every case is confined to the capillary tissue. With the progress of putrefaction, the fluid blood collects in the more lax and distensible parts of the sub-cutaneous tissue, as the loins, scrotum, &c. This pseudo-ecchymosis is, however, uniform in its colour, and explains its doubtful points by its situation and the progress of decomposition.*

Probably the most puzzling cases will be those in which severe epidemics, as petechial fevers or small pox, have been the cause of death, while suspicions of violence are at the same time excited. The system here is, during the last stage of life, verging to putrefaction, and extravasated blood of considerable consistence is not unfrequently found.†

Belloc relates an instructive case which came within his own observation. During the prevalence of an epidemic small pox, a husband maltreated his wife, who was five months advanced in pregnancy. He gave her several kicks on the thighs and abdomen. A week afterwards, she was seized with the small pox, and died in a fortnight after the injury, covered with dark coloured spots, and also with marks of the disease. In this condition she was buried, but her relatives hearing of the ill treatment she had received, complained of the husband, and the body was accordingly disinterred and examined by physicians. They decided, both from the symptoms present during her illness, such as violent hæmorrhage from the nose, and from the appearances observed on the bodies dead from this epidemic, that the cause of death was the small pox, and that the sugillations were the consequences of its malignity.‡

* Orfila's Legons, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 238.

† Mahon, vol. 2, p. 210, who quotes in illustration, some dissections of Stoll.

‡ Belloc, p. 317. See also Bosc *de sugillatione in foro cautè dijudicanda* in Schlegel, vol. 4 p. 67. The following case may be read with profit by all medical men. John Stringer was tried at the Lent assizes, held at Kingston in the county of Surry, in the year 1765, before the late Chief Baron Smythe, for the murder of his wife, and

Rieux, in the conclusions of his remarks on this subject, proposes the question, whether contusions, and their consequence, ecchymosis, can be produced on the dead body? The inquiry is important, not only from the possibility that injury may be inflicted on a corpse for the purpose of implicating an innocent person, but particularly from the rough treatment that bodies brought to the dissecting room often receive. We should, at least, understand whether these have been subjected to violence during life.

Our author does little towards solving the case. If the blows (he observes) have been given shortly after death, when the body is still warm, the blood fluid, and the muscles retain their contractility, some difficulty may be experienced in discriminating; but even here, he adds, there will be no tumefaction, no infiltration, and the blood issuing from the lacerated orifices will remain fluid.*

Dr. Christison, however, in some investigations consequent on the murders by Burke and his accomplices at Edinburgh, has materially added to our knowledge. The spine of the murdered female Margery Campbell, was ruptured in several of its ligaments, and a mass of thick, black semi-fluid blood was collected on the sheath. There was, in several parts of the body, effusion of semi-fluid blood, but not indicated by any external mark. Having good reason to believe that some of these injuries, and particularly that to the spine, had been inflicted after death, he was led to ascertain, by experiment, the effect of blows on the dead body, within a few hours after life had departed.

The conclusions deduced from these, are the following:—
“For some hours after death, blows will cause appearances which, in point of colour, do not differ from the effects of blows

found guilty. It appeared that they had frequently quarrelled, and a young surgeon gave it as his opinion, that some appearances in the corpse were somewhat the appearances of a mortification occasioned by bruises. Mr. Carsan, an eminent surgeon in the neighbourhood, had, on the report of the murder, from mere curiosity, examined the body, and it was so clear that there were no marks of violence thereon, that he had not the least apprehension of the possibility of Stringer's being convicted; but hearing of it, he stated the case to the Archbishop of Canterbury, obtained a respite from Baron Smythe, and finally was the means of obtaining a complete pardon from the King (Phillips's Law of Evidence, Appendix, p. 105.)

* Rieux, p. 272. Chaussier, p. 470.

inflicted recently before death. The discoloration, like lividity or sugillation, generally arises from an effusion of the thinnest possible layer of the fluid part of the blood on the outer surface of the true skin, but sometimes also from an effusion of thin blood into a perceptible stratum of the true skin itself. Dark fluid blood may even be effused into the subcutaneous cellular tissue in the seat of the discolorations, so as to blacken or redden the membranous partitions of the adipose cells, but this last effusion is never extensive."

Thus *severe blows inflicted after death, will exactly imitate slight contusions inflicted during life.* It is evident that the blows producing the last must be trivial.

When the blow during life is more severe, it leaves several effects not to be found on the dead subject; such as swelling from the extent of the extravasation—a yellow margin round the black mark—effusion of blood into the cellular tissue, and an incorporation of blood with the whole true skin, rendering it black, and increasing its firmness and resistance. It is possible that clots of blood might occur from lacerating a considerable vessel in the neighbourhood of loose cellular tissue; but this he had never noticed on the dead body.

Even the inconsiderable appearances of injury first noticed, could only be produced within about three hours after death. As soon as the body became cold, and the muscles acquired rigidity, contusions could hardly be imitated.

Internal hæmorrhage, from the laceration of a considerable bloodvessel, and more especially of a vein, may be produced by violence on the dead body. And the fluid part will have a tendency to collect in the lowest part.

Another fact noticed by observers and corroborated by Dr. Christison, is that the blood will remain fluid in some parts, as in the vessels within the head and spine, while it coagulates in others.*

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 31, p. 244. The following authors on Ecchymosis, &c., are worthy of consultation. Chaussier, Renard and Rullier, in the Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales. "Christison," says Professor Channing in a letter to the author, "in his admirable paper on the effects of blows after death, says that he has known the blood coagulate firmly *eight hours* after death. I have seen the blood coagulate firmly as it flowed in a post mortem examination, in one case, twelve hours after death, and in another, upwards of thirty hours after."

Sanguineous congestions are often found in persons who have been subject to disease. They may also be the effect of violence. And in addition to this, they may be formed after death. The texture of the organs themselves become affected by transudation of blood, and this is particularly seen in the brain, heart, lungs, stomach and veins. To distinguish these appearances they have been styled *pseudo-morbid*. I must preclude myself from going into detail concerning them. The most important changes thus induced in reference to legal medicine, are those of the stomach and intestines, and these I shall hereafter have occasion to notice.

It would appear that they can be artificially imitated. Thus Chaussier by injecting ink into the veins, found it to tinge the neighbouring organs within a short time.* So also with blood introduced after death. It is important not to mistake these alterations for the supervention of gangrene.†

In hot climates, and in the warm season in our own country, the progress of this change is proportionably rapid. Thus Dr. John Davy at Ceylon, found that if the interval between death and the examination was twenty or thirty hours, the serous and mucuous membranes appeared red and inflamed, and particularly those parts which are most exposed to the action of the blood, as the valves and the lining membrane of the heart and blood vessels. The viscera also were dark and livid. He attributes this to the exudation of bloody serum, tinging the parts.‡

* Page 230.

† The following are important authorities on this subject: Chaussier, p. 244, 269. Dr. Yelloly on the vascular appearance of the stomach, which is frequently mistaken for inflammation of that organ, in *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 4. Rigot and Trousseau on the changes that take place after death in the appearance of the blood-vessels, lungs, &c. in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 28, p. 149. Andral's *Pathological Anatomy*, vol. 1, p. 43. He divides hyperæmia, (or preternatural accumulation of blood in the capillary vessels,) produced after death, into three species, from dependent position, from transudation of the blood or some of its component parts, and from chemical affinities. *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, vol. 3, art. *Pseudo-morbid appearances*, by Dr. Todd. Cruveilhier lays it down that all uniform redness without vascular injection or dotting is cadaverical. Prof. Channing of Harvard University has been kind enough to mention to me the following case: "A man died at the hospital so calmly that those about him hardly knew of the event. I saw around his right wrist a broad discoloured circle, deeply livid as if it had been violently beaten. I called the attention of the students to this case, and begged them to observe, that here, quite round the wrist, was a mark that might most easily and as we say naturally have been taken for violence during life."

‡ *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 10, p. 89. The lungs, as I have already intimated, are often gorged, and in most instances, this occurrence can be explained on

The presence or the quantity of serum must be considered with reference to the remarks already made. Magendie has shown that a certain portion is natural to the brain, and we shall hardly be safe in drawing unfavourable inferences from its accumulation. The same remark applies to what are deemed appearances of inflammation in the head and lungs. The membranes are to be examined more in reference to any change of structure that they may have undergone, than as to redness or congestion. So also with the heart.*

Wounds, accompanied with a solution of continuity, if received before death, are marked by red, bloody and separated edges. Blood is also more or less collected in the cellular tissue. While those inflicted afterwards are livid, and their edges close to each other. It would, however, seem from the experiments of Orfila, that a wound inflicted with a cutting instrument *immediately after death*, is with difficulty discriminated.†

“The question whether there has been a *fracture* of the cranium previous to death, is sometimes more difficult to decide than a person who is not accustomed to make dissections would imagine. If the fracture has occurred immediately before the patient’s death, there will be coagulated blood found upon the bones and in the fissures; if the patient has survived for some time, there will be marks of inflammation and perhaps pus in contact with the skull; but if a fracture has been produced in making the examination, (which sometimes happens in even a very careful dissector’s hands,) the blood in the fracture will not be coagulated, nor will there be any effusion around the portions.”‡

the principles now laid down. If, however, the lower part be peculiarly congested, while the body has lain in its usual position, on the back, does it not indicate that the body has been for sometime in an erect posture, and may it not have arisen from violence, as suspension by the neck? Chaussier, p. 83. Renard, p. 109.

* Some useful remarks on the examination of the head may be found in Shaw’s *Manual of Anatomy*, vol. 1. See also Andral on the serous fluid, vol. 1, p. 235. The following extract from Lizars deserves to be remembered. “The cavity which first ceases to contract at death, is the left ventricle; secondly, the left auricle, thirdly, the right ventricle, and lastly, the right auricle, which continues the longest to vibrate. Hence when the heart is laid open, very little blood is found on the left side, while it is accumulated on the right.” *Anatomical Descriptions*, p. 144.

† Orfila’s *Legons*, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 540.

‡ Shaw’s *Manual*, vol. 1, p. 45.

Mr. Alcock, some years since, stated in a public lecture at London, that he had known a fracture of the base of the skull, produced by the awkward and violent tearing of the upper portion, the saw not penetrating deep enough to divide the bones, and this was mistaken by the inexperienced operator, for fracture of the skull producing death. Being a medico-legal case, it might have led to melancholy consequences, had not the error been detected by an observer.

The following remarks are copied from Dr. Godman: "We frequently find the bones of subjects brought for dissection, singularly fractured; sometimes the skull is broken and depressed, or the pelvic junctions separated, with other injuries of a similar character. These, if found on a body submitted for medico-legal investigation, would be readily enough attributed to violence done previous to death. Perhaps the best mode of deciding in these cases, will be to examine the muscles, which are usually broken in the dead subject at the same time with the bone, and exhibit no effusions of blood, whereas it would be found in quantity, if the injury preceded death."*

I may now conclude this portion of my subject with the following narrative as illustrative of the difficulties that attend it, and the caution that is required.

The widow Montbailly of St. Omers, aged sixty, and of a very gross habit, was much addicted to intoxication, and in fact was inebriated daily. On the 27th of July, 1770, at 7 A. M. she was found dead in her chamber, lying on a trunk which had sharp edges. A physician and surgeon visited the body on the next day, (thirty-two hours after her death had been discovered,) and reported that they found ecchymosis and contusions on the arms, thorax, and particularly over the third, fourth, and fifth ribs. The neck and upper part of the breast were also ecchymosed. The head was swelled—blood was extravasated under the skin of the face, and the nose was filled with clotted blood. On the eyelid there was a wound of nine or ten lines in extent, which penetrated to the orbit, and which might have been caused by a sharp or cutting in-

* Physiological Investigations.

strument, but could not, in their opinion, have produced sudden death. On opening the body, all the internal parts were found in a natural state.

The reporters gave it as their opinion, that the ecchymosis, the swelling of the head, and the extravasated blood, were occasioned either by a fall, or by blows from an opposing body, and that the female had died either from the hæmorrhage occasioned by the wound, or from suffocation.

A physician, who from curiosity had attended the examination, but who was not of the commission, stated that the eye was ecchymosed, and that the edges of the wound were irregular and indented.

On combining the result of this inspection, with the fact that the defunct had formerly repeated quarrels with her son and daughter-in-law, it became the prevailing opinion that they had murdered her. The superior court of Arras, before whom the cause was tried, condemned Montbailly and his wife to be broken on the wheel, and it was actually executed upon him. The wife claimed a delay on account of her pregnancy, which was granted. During this interval, a revision of the trial was procured, and the celebrated Louis was consulted, as to the point whether the facts stated proved that the woman had been assassinated. The result of his investigation was, that there was no certain proof of the commission of murder, and that all the circumstances enumerated were stronger proofs of the individual having died from apoplexy, than from any other cause. The following are some of his reasonings and remarks:

Intemperance predisposes to sanguineous apoplexy, and the reporters have neglected their duty in not opening the head of the deceased, since by doing so, the condition of the internal parts would have explained the cause of the hæmorrhage. Again, a person in a state of intoxication, and predisposed to this complaint, would on falling against any sharp edged substance, naturally loose a considerable quantity of blood, and also have the arteries and veins of the head much distended. He totally discards the idea that the hæmorrhage from the wound of the eye was a cause of death.

As to the ecchymosis, or livid spots found on the thorax and arms of the deceased, and which the reporters attributed to blows or falls, M. Louis observes, that they are the ordinary appearances found on those who die in a state of intoxication, and among others, quotes the following case in confirmation, from Morgagni. A beggar went to bed drunk, and died suddenly during the night. This was at the end of January, 1746, On the next evening he was carried to the anatomical hall in Padua, and on the third day after his death he was dissected. Morgagni found the body still warm. The scrotum was ecchymosed, of a red colour, the face filled with blood, not only under the skin, but all the muscles, the membrane that separated them and the glands, appeared engorged. Louis remarks, that these spots should have been particularly examined, in order to have founded any charge upon them.

It appeared further, that the body was examined at the end of the month of July. Might there not have been some incipient putrefaction present, and would not this account for the swelling of the head, the lividness of the thorax, and other similar symptoms? As to the wound in the eye, the reporters themselves leave its effect uncertain, while the cause might have been accidental.

On these grounds, Louis gave it as his opinion, that the report was inconclusive, and that there were no proofs of assassination. The Superior Court of Arras accordingly, in 1772, revoked their decision, exonerated the memory of Montbailly, and enjoined the physicians and surgeons thereafter to extend the examinations to every part of the bodies of those found dead, and also to state in their reports the scientific reasons for all opinions they might give.*

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 64, from the *Causes Célèbres*. See also, at page 98, a similar case from the same, *Cause de Chassagnieux*.

The following case I find mentioned in the lectures of the late Mr. Ashmun, Professor of Law at Harvard University. Those relating to Medical Jurisprudence, are in a course of publication in the *American Jurist*.

On board a ship coming from Calcutta, there had been a disturbance, and one of the sailors was said to have received a blow in the side from a handspike. The evidence was discordant as to his condition subsequent to this. Four months, however, after this, and when he had been in port several days and was freely on shore, he one day ate a large dinner and drank freely. He was taken ill, and a physician was sent for, but he died before any aid could be administered.

An examination took place. The stomach was highly inflamed, and still retained

It will readily occur to the reader, that the preceding observations are incomplete, unless some notice be taken of the SKELETON. Its examination is often necessary, either as a whole or in part, and this, both from the decay of the soft parts and the period that may have elapsed since death. It is highly necessary to be familiar with the variations induced by *age* and *sex*. In children the bones have a larger portion of gelatine, in youth this and the earthy matter are probably equal, while in old age, the phosphate of lime greatly predominates. This explains why sutures are then obliterated, and the alveolar processes absorbed. The following table, taken from the Memoir of Sue,* will serve in determining the *mean proportions* of the skeleton at various ages.

A child of one year old, measures in length 1 foot 10½ inches; length of the trunk, (from the vertex to the symphysis pubis,) 13 inches 6 lines; of the superior extremities, (from the edge of the acromion to the extremity of the fingers,) 9 inches; and of the inferior extremities, (from the symphysis pubis to the soles of the feet, 9 inches.

	<i>Length of trunk.</i>	<i>Sup. extr.</i>	<i>Inf. extr.</i>
<i>Child of three years</i> , 2 feet 9 inches;	19 inches;	14 inches;	14 inches.
<i>Child of ten years</i> , 3 ft. 8 in. 6 lines;	2 feet;	1 ft. 7 in.;	1 ft. 8 in. 6 l.
<i>14 years</i> , 4 feet 7 inches;	2 ft. 4 in.;	2 ft. 6 lines;	2 ft. 3 in.
<i>20 to 25 years</i> , 5 feet 4 inches;	2 ft. 8 in.;	2 ft. 6 in.;	2 ft. 8 in.

After the last age, subjects present no variation in their proportions.

the food of the previous day. The liver was much diseased, and there were numerous abscesses in it. The gall-bladder was also natural. The fifth and sixth ribs were found to have been fractured, so near the sternum, as to occasion a slight depression of it; but the bones were so entirely united as to give no indication of the age of the fractures. The heart and lungs were sound.

On these appearances, the medical examiner gave it as his opinion, that there was a probability that the *fracture of the ribs had produced the diseased appearance of the liver*, and that the influence of the latter had extended to the stomach. The persons accused of injuring the deceased, were on this testimony committed by a justice of the peace, to take their trial for murder.

They were, however, soon brought up again on a writ of habeas corpus before two judges of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and in the meanwhile, the Professor of Anatomy in Harvard University, had made a further examination of the disinterred body. The stomach was found to contain a quart of undigested food, mixed with gin. Its internal surface was highly inflamed, and particularly at the cardiac orifice. There were four or five ounces of water in the pericardium. In the liver were several tubercles, one of which had suppurated, but it had no connexion with the fractured ribs. Indeed the "liver was so situated, that it could not have been wounded by the fractured ribs without penetrating the diaphragm, and the lower part of the lungs." Yet these parts were sound.

The bloodvessels of the heart were highly congested, the ventricles contained much serum, and there was a general effusion throughout the body.

No other opinion could be given than that the present was a case of general disease, induced by intemperance, and that the immediate cause of death, was the overloaded state of the stomach. The prisoners were in consequence discharged. (American Jurist, vol. 14, p. 20.)

* Quoted by Orfila, *Leçons*, vol. 1, p. 79.

Dr. Gordon of Edinburgh, on the other hand, assuming the mean stature of the male, at the time of maturity, to be five feet eight inches, English measure, gives the following measurements:

	<i>Inches.</i>
From the crown of the head, to the top of the pubes,	34.00
From the crown of the head, to the lower margin of the chin,	9.75
From the lower margin of the chin, to the top of the breast,	3.85
From the top of the breast, to the pit of the stomach,	6.08
From the pit of the stomach, to the navel,	6.08
And from the navel to the top of the pubes,	6.08
From the top of the prominence of the shoulder, to the fold of the elbow, ..	12.06
From the fold of the elbow, to the top of the hand,	10.02
The hand, measured in the palm, from the lower fold of the wrist, to the point of the middle finger,	7.75
From the top of the inside of the thigh, to the inside of the joint of the knee, ..	14.06
From the last, to the sole of the foot,	18.05
The foot, measured on the sole, from the posterior margin of the heel, to the point of the great toe,	9.75

The average height of the female, he considers to be about five feet five inches; and, of course, the length of the different regions is proportionably less.*

It is very important to remember that the height of a skeleton is less than that of the individual during life, by about one inch; as for example, a person measuring 5 feet 8 inches, his skeleton will be 5 feet 7 inches. The weight of the skeleton of a middle-sized adult, ranges between 160 and 200 ounces; and that of the female a little lower, from 100 to 150 ounces.†

In none of the osseous parts, is the distinction between the sexes more marked than in the pelvis. No less than six differences are pointed out by Dr. Blundell. "In the male, there is a certain roughness and bulkiness and weight, which strikingly contrast it with the lighter and smoother and more elegant pelvis of the female. In the male pelvis, the ilia or wings of the ossa innominata are more erect; in the female, more expanded. In the male, the brim is more rounded, though somewhat tending to an ellipse, the long diameter of

* Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, vol. 1, p. 255.

† Ibid. on the authority of Soemmering. Craigie's Anatomy, p. 78. Dr. Craigie found a male skeleton measuring 5 feet 6 inches, to weigh 168 ounces, or 10½ pounds avoirdupois. I presume that a skeleton *anatomically prepared*, will be proportionably still less in height than what is stated above.

Orfila, from a number of recent experiments, thinks we should add from an inch and a half to two inches, to the height of the skeleton. (Exhumations, vol. 2, p. 380.)

which stretches from before backward; in the female, the brim, though somewhat rounded, is generally oval, and the long diameter lies between the sides. The male pelvis is deep, the female shallow; the male outlet is very small, the female very capacious. Lastly, in the male, the arch of the pubis is contracted; in the female, it is capacious, to make room for the ready passage of the head.”*

With regard to all the bones, indeed, the female ones are, *cæteris paribus*, smoother and rounder; the cylindrical more slender, and the flat thinner.†

After this unavoidably general sketch, it may be useful to give some illustrations of the necessity of attending to the subject.

An individual in one of the northern settlements of Upper Canada was suddenly missed, after having been seen to go into the woods. Diligent search was made, but in vain. About twenty years afterwards, portions of a human skeleton were discovered by some labourers; and remembering the above circumstances, they were taken to the deceased's friends. Anxiety was excited to ascertain by these, the age of the person; and for this purpose, the lower jaw, from which all the teeth had fallen out, was selected. Great diversity of opinion arose concerning it, both on the spot and in London; but most of the medical examiners pronounced it to be the jaw of an adult, and probably an aged one. On a more minute investigation, however, the permanent teeth were seen cased in their sockets, not one of them having appeared above the level of the alveolar process. It was evidently the jaw of a child.‡

In 1800, at the English Devon assizes, Thomas Bowerman was preferred to the grand jury for the murder of a bastard child, by pushing an awl into its head. The body had been disinterred by order of the coroner; and on the inquest, a hole was found on the side of the head near the ear, agreeably to the testimony of a witness. Mr. Sheldon, a surgeon of Exeter, hearing of this case, attended the grand jury. He exa-

* A comparative table of the dimensions of the pelvis of various human races, by Dr. Vrolik, is given in the *Bulletin des Sciences Médicales*, vol. 9, p. 290.

† Elliotson's *Blumenbach*, p. 412.

‡ *Lancet*, vol. 10, p. 758.

mined the skull, and found that the supposed hole was the natural perforation of a vein; and in proof of this, pointed out a sort of enamel round the opening, which could not have been there if made by force or art. In further illustration, he exhibited several skulls, all having similar perforations, and each hole having a small channel, and the rim or edge of the hole smooth and polished.*

Eugene Aram, the recollection of whose case has been recently revived by the popular novel of Mr. Bulwer, was indicted in 1758, for the murder of Clarke in 1745. An accomplice indicated where the bones could be found, viz. in St. Robert's Cave near Knaresborough. The skull of Clarke was produced in court. "On its left side was a fracture, that, from its nature, could not have been made but by the stroke of some blunt instrument, and could not be replaced but from within. Mr. Locock, the surgeon who produced it, gave it as his opinion, that no such breach could proceed from any natural decay; that it was not a recent fracture by the instrument with which it was dug up, but seemed to be of many years standing."

Aram, in his celebrated defence, suggests that these might have been the bones of hermits or anchorites, and cited cases of caves or cells where such had been found. As to the fracture, he stated that in 1732, the remains of William, Archbishop of York, were taken up by permission, and the bones of the skull were found broken; yet no violence had been offered to him while living. Knaresborough also had a castle besieged during the time of Parliament, and many were killed near it.

Notwithstanding the ingenuity and force of these remarks, he was convicted; and before execution, confessed his crime.†

I will only add the following case, and I have no doubt that its interest will compensate for the necessary detail.

A Piedmontese soldier, aged 46, named Bonino, had retired to a village near Montpellier. He disappeared in 1823, and it was reported that he had gone to Spain; but soon after it was whispered that he had been assassinated, by a girl with whom he lived and a person named Diamont, who had long

* Paris, vol. 3, p. 80.

† Dodsley's Annual Register, 1759, p. 355. For his defence, see Paris, vol. 3, p. 311. The whole trial has been recently republished at Boston.

been intimate with her and married her, nine months after the disappearance of Bonino. Two years more, however, passed before an investigation, when the authorities caused a search to be made, and a body was found in the garden of the suspected person. The only peculiarity recollected about Bonino, was that he had a sixth finger on the right hand, and a sixth toe on the left foot.

On the 30th of April, 1826, (three years after his disappearance,) Dr. Delmas attended the disinterment, at the request of the magistrate, and it is his narrative which I am now giving.

At the depth of eighteen inches, a human skeleton was found lying on its back; the head was slightly bent forward, and the lower jaw was separated from the upper. The arms were crossed on the breast. The ribs still retaining the form of the thorax were separated from the sternum, which was found lying on the opposite vertebræ. Some black hair and a metal button were imbedded in a moist earthy matter, which covered the anterior surface of the sternum. The vertebral column unbroken, had retained its relations with the head and pelvis. The inferior extremities stretched out, and on the same level as the trunk, followed the direction of the axis of the body, and inclined towards each other. The right foot, which alone we saw in place, was still in the shoe, a little bent on the leg and inclined to its outer edge, the left had in digging been removed with the shoe, in which we found only a part of it.

The head, removed from its position, was dry in the frontal region, while the occipital was still moist and lubricated by a fatty matter, among which some black hair was seen. On attentively observing the skull, a deformity was observed at the right external orbital angle, but evidently arising from an injury long anterior to death, since nature had produced a cure. Another lesion, but also of ancient date, existed on the left side of the coronal suture. The left temporal bone, however, attracted most attention. Its squamous portion, almost separated from the parietal bone, was divided into three portions by three cracks, which proceeded from the circumference of the bone and before the external auditory canal, united to a

fourth, which turning round the base of the zygomatic process, terminated in the glenoid cavity. The form of this fracture, and the soundness of the zygomatic arch and mastoid process, induced us to suppose that it was made with a blunt instrument of small size. From the absence of any apparent operation of nature to effect a cure; from the separation of the osseous pieces, and the oozing which took place through the different points of the fracture, we think it had taken place at a time very near death. Indeed it is evident that the injuries observed were the result of a violent blow, that must have brought on a cerebral commotion, which, without considering other accidents, would instantly deprive the individual of the use of his senses and every means of defence.

The shoes in which the bones of the foot were found, some pieces of woollen cloth surrounding the vertebræ of the neck, metal and wooden buttons, a knife, of which the blade was folded in the handle and found at the left side of the breast, some fragments of cloth and velvet, all these inclined Dr. Delmas to believe that the body had been buried, covered with a part, at least, of its clothes.

As to the time during which this body had lain, it probably was three years, according to the descriptions generally given on this subject. This was confirmed by the absence of all gaseous products—by the fœtid odour being replaced by an odour of mouldiness, and by the remains consisting of earthy, friable, fatty brownish and black matter. The only soft parts found were vertebral ligaments, and these, as assimilating more nearly in composition to the nature of bone, ought of course to be the last to disappear.

The bones were now all collected, and the examination continued on the subsequent day. The vertebræ, ribs and bones of the pelvis were articulated. The outlet of the pelvis was narrow, the width of the passages small compared with the depth, the descending rami of the pubis had their anterior face directed outward, with but a small separation. All these led to the opinion that it was the skeleton of a *male*.

Next as to *age*. The complete developement of the bones, that of the processes to which the muscles are attached, the

state of the teeth, being complete, with the exception of the fourth molar of the right side of the lower jaw, (which had been long out, as the alveolar cavity was ossified,) these induced the witnesses to say that he had attained his 40th year. According to the comparative tables of Professor Sue, his height was determined at about five feet five inches.

The bones of the extremities were nearly complete, and the right foot, which was preserved in the shoe, was articulated. Some bones of the left foot were lost in digging. They found only the os calcis, astragalus, scaphoid and cuboid, the five metatarsal and three phalanges. This prevented any articulation, and they were unable to ascertain whether any thing was peculiar. The head of the fourth metatarsal was rounded, extending outwards, and presenting a small articular surface, "which might have been produced by an extra articulation; but not having seen in what manner this bone was articulated with the first phalanx, we could not determine if there had been a sixth toe attached to it."

Except some small bones of the carpus, all those of the right hand were found. The fifth bone of the right metacarpus at once attracted attention. Shorter and thicker than that of the other hand, its extremity towards the phalanx separated into two parts, one of which, truly articular, smooth, narrow, rounded and prominent, had the direction of the axis of the bone, whilst the other corresponding to the cubital edge, formed with it an angle of about eight degrees—not continued so far as the first, it was equally smooth, and presented an articular surface, which differed from it only in its less rounded form. Having tried to articulate the first phalanx of the little finger, it fitted exactly upon the first articular head, and presented upon the side corresponding to the second, a depression, the obliquity of which was in relation with the direction assigned to the second surface.

It was evident from this examination, that a sixth finger must have existed, although the bones could not be found. The left hand exhibited no peculiarity.

The deductions made by Dr. Delmas, were that the individual, whose skeleton he had inspected, was a male, of the

age of forty or upwards, that he had six fingers on his right hand and possibly a sixth toe on the left foot, that he had been murdered by a violent blow from a blunt instrument, which fractured the left temporal bone, and that he had been buried in his clothes. Diamont and his wife were tried and convicted, and before execution, confessed to Dr. Delmas their guilt in the manner specified by him.*

The HAIR is another part of the body which continues long unchanged, and its presence may hence aid us in identifying individuals. It is frequently found in a perfect state on bodies buried a century or more, and indeed is seen but little altered on the mummy. Whether it *grows after death*, is at present a disputed point with many. Dr. Good informs us that examples of this may be found in Heister and Camerarius, where not only the beard was found grown, but hair had sprouted forth from every part of the body. Many of the old writers mention such cases. Pariset and Villerme, in the French Dictionary of Medical Sciences, both profess their credence in this occurrence; and the former relates of a father who preserved the remains of a much loved son for some time, and when he went to view them, the beard, which had been shaven after death, was so grown, that he could scarcely persuade himself but that it was a sign of life.† Bichat remarks, that it is a generally received opinion that the hair and nails grow after death; but while he concedes that we have but few well established facts, he observes that he has certainly noticed a lengthening of the beard in one instance, where the head was submitted to maceration for several days.‡

On the other hand, we may quote as an unbeliever, the name of Haller, a host in itself. He conceived it to be only ap-

* This remarkable case, I have taken from the North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 4, p. 176. That Journal, however, copied it from the Edinburgh Journal of Medical Science, who again translated it from the *Ephemerides Médicales* of Montpellier. It is also quoted in full by Orfila, (*Exhumations*, vol. 2, p. 360,) who while he allows due credit to Dr. Delmas for his successful investigation, makes the following objections to his deductions: The age is not at all certain, it might have been of a person aged 25 or 30, as well as one aged forty and upwards. It is equally impossible to fix the period since interment, with so much precision. And lastly, the facts presented do not *positively* prove that the fracture was inflicted before death.

† Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, Articles *Barbe* and *Poil*.

‡ Anatomie Générale, vol. 4, p. 825.

parent and not real, and owing to a shrinking of the skin. "Among the older writers," says Dr. Bostock, "we meet with narratives, apparently well authenticated, where the hair is said to grow after death, and even to attain an extraordinary length; but upon whatever authority they may appear to rest, we may safely conclude that there is some fallacy or inaccuracy in the statement."*

If we turn to individual cases which might be supposed to settle the question, we find no corroborating proofs. It has been said that the hair of Charles the First of England, was found grown; but Sir Henry Hallford does not mention this, and it certainly would not have escaped him. The body of Hampden was disinterred a century and a half after his death—his hair was found in a *perfect state of preservation*, but nothing is said of its growth.†

On the whole, I look upon this as a point which must have been long since settled by anatomists, from their own experience. Generally, I believe, they discredit it, except as to the beard, and its partial elongation; and for this, we have a sufficient explanation in the opinion of Haller. I shall, however, presently quote a case, in which this growth after death was contended for.

It will form a proper conclusion to this section, to notice the subject of PUTREFACTION, in its bearing on legal medicine.

The earliest changes that take place in the body after life has departed, are coldness, stiffness and lividity. The last I have already noticed. Of the others I may remark, that their supervention is far from being uniform. The bodies of the aged take them on much sooner than those of the young; and again, the nature of the disease has a manifest influence. Thus in apoplexy, the temperature of the body is often maintained far beyond the usual period. "It has indeed been laid down as a general rule, that the more sudden the death, the longer is cadaverous stiffness in taking place."‡ After a certain period, these are succeeded by the occurrence of putrefaction; but many circumstances are found to develope or delay its

* Physiology, vol. 1, p. 74.

† London Quarterly Review, vol. 47, p. 516.

‡ Paris, vol. 3, p. 24.

progress. Heat, humidity, and the contact of air, accelerate it; and it is almost always rapid when from the presence of a typhoid disease, it appears to commence before life is extinguished. Interment, also, if made early, procrastinates it. Some species of earth have a similar effect. It is not, however, all degrees of heat that accelerate it. If it be too high, it may even be prevented, owing to the rapid dissipation of moisture. In the route from Tripoli to Mourzouk, Dr. Oudney often found the ground strewn with the skeletons of the unfortunate victims of the slave trade. The skin and membranous substances were seen shrivelled and dry, and the thick muscular and internal parts were alone decayed. If the dry and hot air of the desert produces such effects, we can readily imagine how similar causes, although acting in a less powerful manner, may operate in different countries, at particular seasons of the year.

Cold, on the other hand, is also well known to retard putrefaction. "Below 50° Fahr., the process is slowly performed, and at 32°, it is altogether suspended. The temperature most favourable to its perfection, is from 60° to 80° or 90°. This is the temperature of our summer, and hence at this time, putrefaction most readily goes forward."*

These observations will serve to elucidate the following case, which excited great interest, some years since, in the United States. The leading points agitated were, *the period when putrefaction supervenes, and the growth of the hair after death.*

Francis Baker left Moore's tavern, in the town of ———, (Kentucky,) after having slept there, at about sunrise of the 2d of November (Tuesday) 1824. He proceeded to Doggate's and breakfasted, in company with Desha and others, at an early hour. Baker and Desha left Doggate's at very nearly the same time, and were again seen together at a quarter of a mile from that tavern. Baker was not seen after this, until he was found a corpse six days after, (Monday.) His throat

* Dr. Beatty, *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, art. *Persons found dead*, vol. 3, p. 322. "Nous savons que tout étant égal d'ailleurs, la putrefaction s'empare plus lentement du cadavre d'un individu mort par hémorrhagie, que de celui dont les vaisseaux sont distendus par le sang." (Orfila's *Exhumations*, vol. 1, p. 329.)

was cut, and there were five wounds on the side of his head, apparently from blows, as the skin was broken. There appears also to have been a wound on the breast, but concerning this there was some conflicting testimony.

The place where the body was found was a hollow, though not steep until you approached near to the body. One of the witnesses, on being asked whether the sun could shine on it, replied, that he did not suppose that it could; it was his impression that the body was rather from the sun. The woods were tolerably thick around the place, there being a good deal of undergrowth. The body was lying near a log; the thighs were next to the road, and the head down hill.

Desha was indicted for his murder, and it became an important question to ascertain whether the state of the body was compatible with the idea of violent death inflicted *six days previous*. I shall endeavour to condense all the evidence on this point.

One witness (Major Lacey) stated that the weather was as usual at that season of the year. Friday of the first week of November had a cold, rainy morning. Gen. Reed said that the weather was fine, and he did not think it was cold enough to have fire. J. Douglas was laying brick during the first week in November; at night, the mortar would freeze. It was too cold for him to commence work in the morning before breakfast. It snowed on some of the last days of the week. Mr. Holt said that the weather was unusually warm for the season. Indeed, some of the members of the legislature apprehended much sickness from this circumstance. It rained on Thursday. Mr. Coleman corroborated this testimony. Tuesday and Wednesday were fine days. "On Friday, it rained and snowed a little. On Saturday, we (the legislature) sat in the church; the members thought it too cool to be without fire; the chimneys which were erected to the church, dried very soon. Sunday was pretty cool. On the whole, I call it mild weather for the season." *Question*. Although the days were pleasant for that season of the year, were not the nights frosty? *Answer*. I think it is probable there was frost; though the first three or four days was charming weather, the last of the week was somewhat colder. Mr.

January deposed that the nights were cool, as the workmen were obliged to cover their work at night. He heard them say that some scales came off that were frozen.

The corpse was a little stiff when taken up; but after carrying it for some time, it became limber. It had no smell of putrefaction. On Tuesday there was no alteration in it, and but little on Wednesday. On Thursday it turned black, and was somewhat offensive. The wounds appeared to be fresh, and bled much, when Dr. John Drake examined them. The body was not swollen when found; but on Wednesday, or shortly before it was interred, (which was on Thursday,) the abdomen and face were greatly swollen. A fire had been kept in the large room where the corpse lay.

Dr. John Drake examined the body on Wednesday, after it had been washed and dressed. He thinks there were five wounds on the head, all severe, and generally two inches in length. There was a large wound of the throat, about four inches in length; another on the breast, and another on the shoulder. There were no symptoms of putrefaction about the body, and hardly any smell. Dr. Charles Scudder saw the body (probably on Wednesday, and observed some blood or bloody water issuing from the wound. This, he stated, was such as would result after the corpse had lain for some time, and not as from a fresh wound. In answer to a question whether he inferred that the wounds had been recently made, he replied, that he did not examine those on the head, but that on the throat did not appear fresh.

The discussion elicited by these facts, is not without interest. Dr. Drake was asked, whether it was according to the animal economy, that the body of a man after death should be ten days without putrefying, unless it was frozen? *Ans.* If there was a discharge of much blood, as I suppose was the case with this man, it might. *Quest.* Would not the contents of the stomach produce putrefaction? *Ans.* They would, unless there had been spirits drank. *Quest.* Do you think that spirits would lie in the stomach of a dead man for ten days? (It appeared that Baker had drank twice before leaving Doggate's.) *Ans.* I am not prepared to say, but I think it would have its effect to a certain extent. *Quest.* Unless the body

was frozen, did you ever know an instance of the suspension of putrefaction? *Ans.* I don't know that I have, but I suppose there might be an instance. *Quest.* Would you suppose one would lie seven, eight or ten days in the woods, without attracting the buzzards? *Ans.* It would depend much on the season, and on the posture in which the body lay. Mr. Lacey deposed that he had known dead bodies, such as hogs, dogs, &c. to lay a considerable time at that season of the year, without becoming putrid. Gen. Reed, on the contrary, never knew any thing to lay that length of time, (eight or ten days) without exhibiting greater signs of putrefaction than Baker did. It was remarked, (he says,) the morning after the corpse was found, that he did not look as if he had been killed more than one night.

Dr. Frazer stated that it was not unusual for a corpse, in eight or ten days after death, to become limber; and upon being moved, to discharge from the wounds, nostrils, &c. a part of the serous portion of the blood, inasmuch as a relaxation of the muscles, and a loss of the coagulable powers of the blood, were the first symptoms of putrefaction; that the length of time before any symptoms of putrescence can be discovered, depends much on the weather, whether cold or warm, and on the manner of death; as he had known bodies to lie throughout the winter, without exhibiting any symptoms of it; and as the process of putrefaction is much slower to commence in a body that has died from great loss of blood, than in ordinary cases of death.

The counsel for the prisoner, of course, dwelt much on this absence of putrefaction, as a proof that the death must have been recent. The judge (Shannon) himself inclined to this belief. "It is difficult to suppose (said he) that a body, at this or any season of the year, could have remained that long, without exhibiting some symptom of putrescence: connect, also, that in two or three days after it was found, it did show such symptoms as in that time might naturally be expected."

As to the other point, it would appear from the testimony on the inquest, that the beard was quite short when first seen, and had the appearance of being recently shaven. In the interval between Tuesday and Thursday, it appeared to have

got a little longer. It was stated, at the same time, that the face had become swollen.

The counsel for the prisoner appears to have taken it as a conceded fact, that the *beard will grow after death*, Mr. Rowan, an eminent advocate, said that the fact was tested in numerous instances of disinterred bodies. "An acorn, (said he,) after it has fallen, produces the oak. Cut down a buck-eye in the spring when the leaves are just budding, and they will grow until the sap which is up is exhausted: Just so in relation to the beard."

If this position was deemed correct, it furnished another proof against the supposed period of the murder. The medical witnesses, however, were far from agreeing to so positive an opinion. They conceded that, in some cases, the beard appeared to grow after death; but that this was owing to the collapse or shrinking of the flesh, which thus gave it a more prominent appearance.*

The presence of the putrefactive process is not, however, to deter us from the necessary examination. We have an efficient agent in the chloride of lime or soda to remove any unpleasant odour. And it should be sprinkled around the room, or on the table where the body lies, and not on the body itself, since it is found to change both the colour and consistence of the parts. Not unfrequently, indeed, a subcarbonate of lime has been formed on the surface, from the union of the liquor with the gases that are emanating.

Although dissection may thus be pursued with advantage, and often to the elucidation of doubtful cases, yet this is precisely the period when disputes concerning the *identity* of dead bodies frequently occur. The characteristic features become lost, and we can only depend with safety, on such peculiar physical marks as may have been present. On a trial that took place some years since at Edinburgh, for stealing subjects

* "Trial of Isaac B. Desha, for the murder of Francis Baker, held at Cynthiana, Kentucky, before the Hon. George Shannon: Reported by Robert S. Thomas and George W. Williams, Lexington, 1825." I am indebted for this pamphlet to the kindness of Dr. Daniel Drake, of Cincinnati. Desha was found guilty, but a new trial was granted on some legal grounds, and he appears to have escaped from the United States into Texas, where he died some years since. On his deathbed, he is said to have confessed the murder; but I have no authority for this except the newspapers.

where the body had been interred nine weeks before the recognition, Dr. Barclay, the anatomist, testified, that the longest time he ever knew, during which the features remained recognizable, was a fortnight. Yet a witness swore particularly to the identity of the body.*

For an accurate knowledge of the successive changes of the body in its progress to complete decomposition, we are indebted to the indefatigable labours of Orfila, and I will conclude this section with a short abstract of the more striking facts noticed by him.

The *epidermis* is very rapidly destroyed. It separates from the surface; is converted into a greasy, reddish brown substance, and finally disappears. If, however, it has been detached during life, by an effusion of serum beneath it, it will then long resist putrefaction. The *nails* soften, and are readily detached. They lose their semi-transparency, and in process of time become dry. The *hair* strongly resists decomposition, and remains unaltered for years. The *cutis* is at first yellowish, but soon takes a greenish, reddish, and violet tint. At a later period, small sand like granulations, consisting of phosphate of lime, form on it. It gradually dries, becomes darker in colour, and is covered with the greasy mould already spoken of. The *subcutaneous cellular tissue* dries on the anterior portion of the body, but becomes infiltrated, soft and tender, on the dependent part. At a later period the adipose part of it begins to saponify, and is of a grayish white colour, and of the consistency of suet. This, however, is not inviolable. Finally, what is not thus converted, becomes dry, brown, and is at last destroyed.

The *muscular tissue* softens at first, takes a greenish tint, is gradually reduced to a jelly, and in fat bodies changes to soap; in others it dries. The *aponeuroses and tendons* preserve for a long time their brilliancy and firmness, but after a while become yellow and then brown. The tendons resist putrefaction longer than any other part. The *ligaments and cartilages*

* G. Smith's Forensic Medicine, 2d edit. p. 506. There must, however, be sufficient latitude allowed for the season and the nature of the ground in which the body has been interred. All I mean to urge is that grievous mistakes are often made from too great confidence. In the notes to the chapter on *Age and Identity*, several instances are given by Dr. Dunlop.

resemble the tendons in their changes. The last, however, before they disappear, become black and fragile. The *bones and teeth* are indestructible by this process. The *serous tissue* becomes gray, and softened, then from blue to black before they disappear. Orfila recognized the pleura, in a body interred in a thick coffin, and raised fourteen months after death. The brain does not putrefy so rapidly, as might be supposed from what happens when it is removed out of the cranium. For several weeks after interment, if the weather be moderate, it preserves so much of its natural appearance, that we can trace its different parts. After this, however, it softens gradually to a thin greenish paste, at first intolerably fœtid, but finally without this, and much diminished in bulk. The *nerves* remain permanent for many months. The *eyes* sink and rapidly decay. Nothing is then found but the fat peculiar to dead bodies. In not a single instance of disinterment did Orfila find a vestige of them four months after death.

The *lungs* are at first congested in the manner we have already described, and their structure does not alter rapidly. They finally become green, soft and shrunken, and lastly, dry and black. The *diaphragm* also decays slowly, and both it and the lungs have often on their surface the white granulations of phosphate of lime. The *heart* softens, grows gradually darker in colour, collapses, and is reduced to a few blackish filaments. The *bloodvessels* for two or three months after interment, contain a certain amount of black blood, either fluid or coagulated. They also change in colour, and their respective coats are readily separable. The *stomach* presents a great variety of appearances shortly after death. Much of this depends on the quantity of blood accumulated in its vessels, and the comparative state of health or disease in that organ during life. So also with the *intestines*. In a short time, the mucous membrane of both becomes greenish and sensibly softened, then dark and black, and finally, the whole substance dries into membranes, which at last are converted into a moist black mould. The *liver* softens, forms granulations on its surface, then becomes blackish brown, and not unfrequently instead of drying is converted into a black substance, resembling

the grease of wheels.* The *gall-bladder* alters slowly. The other viscera soften soon, lose their texture, and are converted into the greasy matter already noticed.

In all his examinations of disinterred bodies, every portion of the face was destroyed between the third and fourth month, although the bones still remained slightly attached by their articulations. The thorax rarely undergoes any change for the first three months. So also with the abdomen, except the change of colour in its integuments. After that, it collapses, and its parietes become very thin.

Orfila also observed, that the shorter the time between death and burial, the more slow will be the progress of putrefaction. So also in proportion to the depth of the grave. If buried naked, it occurs more rapidly than when clothed. Contrary to the received opinion, which assigns at least three years, he has in a majority of cases, found bodies reduced to a skeleton at the end of 14, 15 or 18 months, even when buried in coffins and wrapped in clothes.

With respect to the fat or soapy matter, of which I have repeatedly spoken, Orfila conceives that it is never formed but in those parts of the body in which there exist fat and azotic matter. This is the *adipocire* of the older chemists, which according to Chevreul, consists principally of margaric and oleic acids, and ammonia. Nearly three years are necessary to convert bodies buried in earth into it, while in water, as we shall hereafter show, the transformation is much more rapid. The soil also, and the number of bodies interred together, have a striking effect in producing this change. If not fat, but dry and meagre, and lying in separate graves, saponification rarely occurs.†

In some instances, margarate and oleate of lime, and carbonate or sulphate of ammonia are formed, owing, as Orfila

* Ollivier D'Angers and Chevallier, have recently discovered a peculiar substance produced from all or most of the soft organs, but particularly the liver, about three months after interment. It is a white, hard matter, in the form of irregular granulations, and disposed either in bands or zones. It is found on the surface or in the interior of the liver, and on the internal wall of the veins and arteries. On analysis, it was found to consist of an ammoniacal salt, a fatty matter, muriate of soda, and traces of some other salts. It is thus evidently formed from the decomposition of the body, and cannot be mistaken for poison. (Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Jour. vol. 40, p. 483.)

† Orfila's Exhumations, vol. 1, p. 22.

supposes, to water containing the salts of lime, infiltrating through the earth to the bodies.*

II. OF DEATH FROM NATURAL CAUSES.

Sudden death from natural causes most commonly originates from one or other of the following affections: apoplexy; rupture of an aneurism or of a large vessel into one of the cavities; bursting of purulent cysts; ossification of the valves of the heart; rupture of this organ; bursting of some blood vessels into the air passages, and idiopathic asphyxia. And of all these, the passions, whether exciting or depressing, (but most commonly the former) are frequently the agents in producing the fatal termination.

Apoplexy is a disease which in some instances may be mistaken in its early symptoms, and may terminate fatally in situations which preclude any observation of the event. We should here attend to the conformation of the body—the large head, short neck and plethoric frame, to the posture in which the person is found, the food that he has recently eaten, the ligatures that surround any part; and, above all, to the appearances on dissection. There is, however, a form of this disease, denominated *simple apoplexy* by Dr. Abercrombie, which is often fatal within the twenty-four hours, and leaves in the dead body no traces, not even congestion of the vessels within the head. Here, if there be no marks of injury, we are of course precluded from a charge of violence; and it is only necessary to remember, that persons seized with apoplexy may have fallen from a height, and thus wounded themselves.†

The ruptures or burstings that I have enumerated, have sometimes been indicated by premonitory symptoms; but

* This is of course but a very brief analysis of the *Exhumations Juridiques* of Orfila. The parts relative to bodies found in water, I shall notice under the head of *persons found drowned*, and the state of the stomach and intestines under that of *poisons*. I must add, that I have been indebted to an excellent analysis of the first volume, in the North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 12, p. 42.

† Dr. Bright mentions several instances that came under judicial examination, in which the cause of death was shown to be apoplexy. In some of these, he found nothing but very slight effusion, and *tumors in the choroid plexus*. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 20, p. 7.)

even if their previous history be unknown, dissection will explain their nature.*

Idiopathic asphyxia was first described by Mr. Chevalier. The patient often apparently in perfect health, becomes faint, and suddenly expires. On dissection the heart is found flaccid, and all its cavities are empty of blood. Dr. Beatty relates a case that occurred to him of a healthy female in the ninth month of pregnancy, who suddenly expired, after a very slight sickness and attempt to vomit. Every part was carefully examined, and he observes, that he had never seen a healthier condition of the organs. The heart, however, though sound, was flaccid, and all its cavities were empty, while its proper veins were much distended with blood.†

As examples of sudden passion hurrying these diseases to a fatal crisis, the following may be cited from Paris: "Dr. Gordon Smith mentions the following case as occurring in one of the midland counties of England. In the course of an altercation between a man and his wife, the woman died, and a clamour was raised that the husband had murdered her. An inquest was held, a verdict returned against him, and he stood his trial at the following assizes. He was however acquitted, for it appeared in evidence that he had not even touched his wife during the quarrel. The deceased was a person of extremely violent temper, and on opening her body, it was found that she had been labouring under suppuration of the liver, and that an abscess had burst into the cavity of the abdomen, in consequence of the agitation into which she had been thrown." Again, Barron Larrey describes the case of a person who had been severely wounded in the thorax, in a duel, but was progressively recovering, when in the fourth month from the period of the injury, he died suddenly dur-

* See Art. *Rupture of the Heart*, by Dr. Townsend, in *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, vol. 4. Rupture of the aorta, mistaken at first for poisoning, *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 8, p. 227.

† Chevalier and Wood's cases, *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 1, p. 157.—Beatty, *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, vol. 3, p. 325. The total want of blood in the heart, would not, however, appear to be invariable, as Professor Christison quotes an undoubted case from Rochoux, in which the auricles contained a large quantity of it. (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 31, p. 242.)

ing a violent fit of anger. On dissection, the heart and pericardium exhibited traces of inflammation.*

Dr. Christison, in a recent publication, has added some very valuable observations and useful cautions to this branch of our subject.† The facts, that “sudden death from latent causes frequently occurs, where collateral circumstances lead to a suspicion of violence, and that these are apt to prove suddenly fatal, from the operation of slight violence, or of circumstances incidental to violence, as anger, struggling, and the like, and that the appearances they leave may present the same characters with those from death by violence,” are so many strong circumstances to demand a careful examination.

The principal diseases that he enumerates as often existing for a long time, without seriously incommoding the patient or alarming his friends, are of the *head*, sanguineous apoplexy and inflammation of the cerebral membranes, or of the substance of the brain. As to the first, he remarks, that the presence of a clot in the brain, particularly if it be plainly of some standing, would not of itself be enough to account for death. Inflammation of the membranes may proceed to such an extent as that considerable effusions and even suppuration be present, without marked symptoms. And this circumstance is applied to a medico-legal case. A son, in a state of intoxication, was left struggling with his father, aged seventy, of passionate disposition, but in good health. Seven minutes after, the old man was found dead, on his back, with the mark of two blows on the nose and forehead, not particularly severe. On dissection, no fracture, extravasation or laceration could be found; but there was an effusion of half a pint of

* Paris, vol. 3, p. 15. There is also a remarkable case related by Professor Mott, of sudden death in a female deserted by her paramour. She had been dissolute and probably intemperate, but was robust, and had not complained of any indisposition beyond slight rheumatic pains. She was dejected on going to bed, and in the morning was found dead, without any appearance of suffering. On dissection, the left ventricle was found ruptured, and an abscess was also seen in its parietes. The pericardium contained a large quantity of coagulated blood. (Transactions of the Physico-medical Society of New-York, vol. 1, p. 151.) A case of rupture of the duodenum without external injury, but originating in a fit of anger, is mentioned by Dr. Dupuy, in the *Journal Medical de la Gironde*, vol. 6, p. 147.

† Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine, vol. 4, art. *Latent Diseases*. There is also a good article on the causes of sudden death, in the *London Medical Repository*, vol. 27, p. 25.

reddish serum in the ventricles, and also towards a pint of serum in the cavity of the pleura on each side of the chest. Some medical men ascribed death to the effusion, and the effusion to the blow. But undoubtedly this effusion could not have occurred in seven minutes, and was more probably the result of previous disease. Softening or ulceration of the substance of the brain is also frequently observed in those dying suddenly.

Of the latent diseases of the *chest*, Professor Christison enumerates pleurisy, peripneumony and organic diseases of the heart. Each of these may pursue their course for a long period, without exciting suspicion. So also of ulcerations of the membranes of the *stomach* and intestines, chronic derangements of the viscera, extra-uterine conceptions of various kinds. Some develop themselves sooner than others, but all have occasionally concealed their formidable nature until the last moment.

In recurring to the fact, that all of these are most apt to prove suddenly fatal, under the operation of violence, and thus bring the case before a legal tribunal, Dr. Christison advises attention to the following sources of exculpatory evidence.

1. When the morbid appearances indicate that derangements of structure or function have been induced, incompatible with the continuance of circulation or respiration. As when a rupture of the heart produces a large effusion of blood into the pericardium.
2. When appearances are seen, which, although not incompatible, as we should suppose, with life, yet are known seldom or never to occur, except where death speedily follows. Of this may be mentioned, rupture of the gall ducts or gall bladder, or a recent perforation of the stomach.
3. Another description of evidence is derived from the symptoms immediately before death corresponding with the appearances discovered.
4. We can often decide, and particularly in cases of suspected poisoning, that the circumstances noticed will not bear out the idea.
5. It is not an unfrequent occurrence for sudden death from latent disease to take place during the early stage of convalescence from other diseases—from some

unusual or violent exertion—or from some emotion of mind, and particularly anger.*

III. DEATH FROM VIOLENT CAUSES.

This division of our subject may, with justice, be considered as the most important in the whole range of medical jurisprudence. It is so, not only from the number but the variety of cases that come under examination. In commencing their investigation, it is necessary to remark, that a particular term has of late years been much employed to express the peculiar mode of death that occurs in most of them. I refer to the word *asphyxia*. As at present understood, it means “those cases of the cessation of the heart’s action, which arise from a particular cause, namely, the interruption of respiration—or to speak more correctly, the interruption of the effect produced by that function on the blood.”

The phenomena of respiration are twofold—mechanical and chemical. To the former we refer the motion of the ribs and diaphragm in performing inspiration and expiration, and to the latter, the inspiration of oxygen and its results. Now, it is rather the popular idea to consider asphyxia principally in reference to the chemical changes induced. There cannot, however, be a doubt but that mechanical obstructions are equally efficient agents. The following division of asphyxia, by Savary, and many other modern writers, will illustrate these ideas.

1. *Asphyxia from mechanical impediments to respiration*, as by compression of the chest and abdomen, and seen in cases of large quantity of ground falling on persons digging, &c.; by air entering into the cavities of the chest or abdomen; by a wound of the diaphragm, with pressure of the abdominal viscera towards the stomach. 2. *Asphyxia from want of power*

* On the first appearance of malignant cholera at Sunderland, a female attacked with it died in twenty-four hours. She had been engaged in a brawl the day before, and had received a slight wound with a fork. “This death occurred at an early period of the epidemic, when many influential persons, including some medical men, were loudly asserting that no unusual disease existed in the town. It was therefore very generally asserted, that the patient had died of the wound and of blows on the head and face, the marks of which, it was said, were so very obvious. The body was examined in the presence of medical men of both opinions, and the questions finally set at rest by a coroner’s jury. (Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 38, p. 124.)

In the section on *Strangulation*, I shall mention some cases of accidental death, or rather of apoplexy mistaken for it.

in the respiratory vessels, as from a division of the spinal marrow; from lightning; from cold; and from general debility, as in new-born children. 3. *Asphyxia from want of air*, by its rarefaction; by suffocation; by submersion; by strangulation. 4. *Asphyxia from want of respirable air*. And lastly, 5. *Asphyxia from irritating or deleterious gases*.

While each of these causes has phenomena in some degree peculiar to itself, and which will be most usefully considered under its appropriate head, there are still some common to all, which may be here briefly indicated.

The symptoms consequent on impeded respiration are more or less striking, as well as rapid in succession, according as the obstruction to it is more or less complete. Among the earliest are a sensation of distress, and an effort to dilate the chest. The struggle is longer or shorter, according to circumstances, and convulsive movements accompany it, with suffusion of the face, swelling of the veins, protrusion of the eyes, &c. Torpor, before long, succeeds—often with a general relaxation even of the sphincter muscles. The heart, however, even now continues for a brief period to propel the venous blood it receives from the pulmonary vessels. This also ceases, and life is at the instant of departing.

In more protracted cases, it has been noticed that there is less suffusion of the face, but a more extensive discoloration of the skin on other parts of the body.

On examination after death, these spots are found, and they are distinguished from those observed in dead bodies kept in one position, by being seen in all parts, and according to Dr. Roget, by having their seat chiefly in the mucous membrane of the skin. Rigidity occurs early; the eyes are distended, and the pupils prominent.

A great accumulation of blood is observed in the pulmonary vessels, and in the right auricle and ventricle and their great veins, while the left auricle and ventricle are comparatively empty. The liver, spleen and kidneys are gorged; the lungs distended, and the blood thick and dark-coloured, and but rarely coagulated. If the struggle has been violent, the vessels of the head are found full, particularly the veins and sinuses; and a section of the cerebral substance exhibits an un-

usual number of red points, and this last is often accompanied with an effusion of serum in the ventricles. On the contrary, when the death has been easy, the vessels of the brain are often natural.

These are the principal appearances noticed. There are others, which will hereafter be pointed out as peculiar to various causes.

My limits preclude me from going into detail concerning the theory of asphyxia. In addition to a reference to authorities worthy of examination, I will only remark, that the earliest opinion entertained was, that the cessation of the motion of the heart in these cases was owing "to some mechanical impediment to the transmission of the blood through the lungs, arresting its course, and preventing its access to the left auricle. But the experiments of Goodwyn and others have sufficiently proved that no such mechanical obstruction exists, and that even after the fullest expiration, the air remaining in the air vesicles of the lungs distends them sufficiently to permit the blood to circulate freely through them." Hence the prevailing opinion at the present day, is that chemical changes take place in the blood. It can no longer be converted from venous into arterial blood, and in this state is deleterious to the organs to which it is sent. To Goodwyn and Bichat, we are indebted for this theory. The blood is supposed by the latter to act on the brain, and through it on the whole nervous system. Whenever then this in its venous state reaches the brain, the loss of sensibility takes place, and not before. Hence also the convulsions that occur. The effect of this now poisonous fluid is extended to the capillary vessels of the lungs. They transmit less and less blood, until finally the action of the heart ceases, leaving the right side full and the left nearly empty.

Among later experimenters on this subject, are Edwards, Williams and Kay. Dr. Williams, from his investigations, deduced the following conclusions: That the passage of blood through the lungs is obstructed on the suspension of respiration, while its circulation through the other parts of the body is continued; that this obstruction is not mechanical, but arises from the deprivation of pure atmospheric air; that this ob-

struction or interruption to the motion of the blood through the lungs, is one of the principal causes of the emptiness of the arteries after death; and finally, that the immediate cause of the cessation of the action of the heart, is a privation of its natural stimulus, arising from the interruption of the movement of the blood through the lungs.

The experiments and inquiries of Dr. Kay have led him to the following deductions: That the circulation is arrested after respiration ceases; because from the exclusion of oxygen and the consequent non-arterialization of the blood, the minute pulmonary vessels which usually convey arterial blood, are incapable of conveying venous blood, which then stagnates in the lungs. The functions of the muscular organs cease in asphyxia, because the circulation is thus arrested in the lungs, and as a result from these opinions, he infers that venous blood does not possess any noxious quality, but is simply less nutritious and stimulating, than arterial blood.*

In further noticing this subject, I shall arrange my remarks under the following subdivisions:

- A. Of persons found dead from cold.
- B. Of persons found dead from hunger.
- C. Of persons found dead from lightning.
- D. Of persons found dead from burns.
- E. Of persons found dead from wounds.
- F. Of persons found dead from noxious inhalations.
- G. Of persons found hung.
- H. Of persons found strangled.
- J. Of persons found smothered.
- K. Of persons found drowned.

* I refer those who are desirous of studying this subject, to the following authorities:

- Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, vol. 2, art. *Asphyxia*, by Savary.
 Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine, art. *Asphyxia*, by Dr. Roget.
 Copland's Dictionary, art. *Asphyxia*.
 Mr. Brodie's views, in Paris's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 16.
 Goodwyn, Kite, Kay, on Asphyxia.
 Williams, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 524; Kay, in do., vol. 29, p. 37; and in North of England Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 1, p. 453.
 Lancet, N. S. vol. 14, p. 315, 387.
 Reviews of Kay, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, v. 42, p. 216; Medico-Chirurg. Review, v. 25, p. 92; and London Medical Quarterly Review, v. 3, p. 46.
 Review of Roget, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 394.
 Goodwyn's Answer to Bichat, Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 34, p. 74.
 Thomas on Asphyxia, in Lancet, N. S. vol. 9, p. 814.
 Hodge on Sedation, American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 10, p. 104.
 An Analysis of Edwards on the Influence of Physical Agents on Life, Medico-Chirurg. Review, vol. 22, p. 1.

The subject of poisoning, as I have already stated, is so extensive, that I shall postpone it to a distinct chapter.

I may also premise that in many medico-legal cases, a most difficult question often arises, after all doubt is removed as to the immediate cause, and that is, whether death is owing to suicide or homicide. I shall have occasion to notice this under most of the subdivisions, and will now only direct the reader's attention to some preliminary inquiries.

The moral history of the individual, should if possible, be ascertained, his disposition of mind and his worldly condition. The insane, we know, are very prone to commit suicide, and therefore any circumstance tending to establish a disordered state of mind, deserves notice. It is proper to ask, whether the individual has met with any losses or disappointments, whether he has been solitary in his habits, and whether any of his family or connexions, have an interest in his death. It is sometimes said, that apart from the influence of fanaticism or insanity, suicides will generally select a certain and easy mode of death, but this is too broad an assertion for all cases. In some, however, the mode itself is presumptive either for or against.

The season of the year may have some effect, and in very many instances, dissection develops some chronic affection of long standing, which may have had its influence. Thus Morgagni found in the brains of maniacs an extraordinary hardness, and Durande and Fourcroy, along with this condition, observed an induration of the liver, and calculi in the gall-bladder. Esquirol and Osiander mention scrofula, affections of the genitals, organic diseases of the heart, chronic enteritis, &c. as especially predisposing to the commission of suicide.

Each case, however, has its peculiarities, and demands a close and deliberate examination.*

* The following case (from Hecker's Annalen,) in addition to several others, that I shall notice particularly, under Wounds, will serve to show the difficulty that sometimes happens in discriminating.

A Silesian butcher caught his wife in the act of adultery. The effect was to drive him into a state of distraction. He dashed his head several times against the wall, but finding this ineffectual, took a cleaver and struck himself violently on the forehead with the edge of the instrument until he fell dead from the loss of blood. It is supposed that he must have inflicted at least one hundred wounds on himself.

A. Of persons found dead from cold.

Death from exposure to cold, if it happen at a distance from towns or dwellings, is generally characterized by circumstances not to be mistaken. It may, however, occur in populous places, and is then more liable to misconstruction and suspicion.

The common and early effects of severe cold are sleepiness, stupor and numbness. The individual is unwilling to be roused from this state, and has no apprehension of its fatal consequences. In the march from Moscow, where, however, the French soldiers laboured under the combined effects both of hunger and cold, the insensibility and disposition to sleep often came on while they were walking. And although able to continue this for a short time, yet they could not be made to understand any thing addressed to them. Beaupré remarks, that the muscles of the trunk were the last to lose the power of contraction. The pulse was small and insensible, and there was a quiet delirium present.*

It is evident that the effects of extreme cold, are to contract the external capillaries, and thus drive the blood to the internal parts, and some explain the constant tendency to lethargic apoplexy, to the determination to the head that is thus induced.

According to Mr. Brodie, the effects of cold, are 1. To lessen the irritability and impair the functions of the nervous system. 2. To impair the contractile power of the muscles. 3. To cause contraction of the capillaries, and thus lessen the superficial circulation, and stop the cutaneous secretion. As to the mode of its operation he imagines, that "it probably destroys the principle of vitality equally in every part, and does not exclusively disturb the functions of any particular organ."†

We have but few accounts of dissection in these cases. Dr. Kellie of Leith, examined the bodies of two persons found dead after a severe storm, on the night of the 3d of Novem-

This was done in the presence of several persons, but suppose his dead body had been found with these marks of injury upon it, and no countervailing evidence, would not murder have been suspected? (London Medical Repository, vol. 28, p. 83.)

* Beaupré on Cold, translated by Dr. Clendenning. Larrey's Surgical Memoirs, p. 78. Any thing that weakens the nervous system, as hunger, intoxication, &c. renders the individual insensible to the effects of cold.

† Paris, vol. 2, p. 61.

ber, 1821. There was nothing remarkable in the external appearance of either. But little blood flowed on dividing the scalp. The dura mater was congested and suffused, and its sinuses loaded with black blood. The pia mater was turgid and congested. In each, also, between three and four ounces of serum were found in the ventricles and at the base of the brain. Not only did the appearances in the head thus correspond in these two individuals, (a male and female,) but even the stomach and small intestines were precisely similar. The stomach was of its usual pale colour, the small intestines were deeply coloured from a general and minute injection of their vessels. The liver was congested.

Dr. Kellie does not deem the effusion of serum a *post mortem* production, and inclines to the opinion that it was produced in the short interval between their exposure and death. Its occurrence in both, is certainly a forcible argument in favour of this supposition; but it may, as in a former case, have been existing previous to the accident.

Our author states that he could find but one recorded dissection on this subject, and that is by Quelmalz, in the 6th vol. of Haller's *Disputationes*. Here "the vessels of the brain were turgid with blood, and in the ventricles was an effusion of serous lymph."* Other authorities, as Rosen, Cappel and Martin, (but all uniting in the same statement,) are, however, quoted by Kay and Copland.

The absence of any marks of injury is a guide in cases of this kind, especially when other circumstances point to the cause in question. "When a person is found dead from the effects of extreme cold, there are no marks of external violence, nor internal suffering. The body lies as if in a deep and calm sleep, without any external appearances to guide us as to the cause of death, except perhaps a swelling of the extremities, which has come on prior to death."†

* Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 1, p. 34. There is also a case of recovery from the effects of cold, given by Dr. Kellie, in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 302.

† Dunlop's M. S. Lectures on Medical Jurisprudence. Dr. Ozanam of Lyons, mentions the following case, as another mode in which cold may cause death. A cruel stepmother, after a long course of ill treatment by beating and starvation, took her daughter, aged eleven, on a cold morning in December, and forced her to enter a barrel

As a supplement to this division, I must say a few words on sudden death from *drinking cold water*, although I am not sure, but that its appropriate place is under that of sudden death by apoplexy. Dr. Rush was the first writer who distinctly noticed it. He states, that during the warm weather of summer, but seldom unless the heat is above 85°, as many as four or five persons have died in a day, from drinking a large quantity of cold water. The symptoms induced were dimness of sight, muscular weakness, so that the patient suddenly falls down, difficult breathing, rattling in the throat, suffused countenance, livid extremities, imperceptible pulse, and death, all in the course of some five or ten minutes. Others again were seized with spasms, and died in them.

The fatal consequences at the season in question, are not, according to Dr. Rush, restricted to cold water alone, as he has known punch, beer, or toddy, drunk under similar circumstances, to produce equally fatal effects.

It has, however, been strongly questioned, whether the cold water is so important an agent in producing these effects, as was supposed. It is urged that the heat of the body varies but little at any time; that farmers during harvest, constantly drink water drawn from wells, which is decidedly colder than the water in cities, and yet these effects are unknown in the country. Again, Dr. Dickson of Charleston, South-Carolina, a city in the "fervid south," states that such cases are unknown there. He has never heard of one during the whole period of his practice, and yet ice and iced waters are in constant use. An English traveller, speaking of Naples, observes, "It surprises some strangers to see that the Neapolitans, at the hottest time of the day, and when they are in a state of the most profuse perspiration, from the effects of work or of walking in the broiling sun, will stop before one of these temples and take off a large glass full of the coldest water at a draught

filled with water. Although extricated by a servant after some time, she was again replaced by the brutal mother, and in it she died. On the trial for this crime, she was condemned to imprisonment for life. This refined species of cruelty, remarks Dr. Ozanam, presents a new subject for inquiry in legal medicine. There was no submersion, nor the ordinary effects of cold, nor any internal lesion, but an actual *assideration*, (a word which I confess I do not understand,) produced by the external application of cold. (*Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 6, p. 207.)

and with impunity. But this they all do daily in the hottest weather several times in the course of the day. We believe, also, that few foreigners live long at Naples, without doing precisely the same thing and with just the same impunity.”*

Many physicians are hence inclined to believe that a state of commencing apoplexy is present, induced by the heat of the sun, or *isolation*, as it is called; by the exhaustion from severe labour, for it is generally labourers who are attacked; and by the previous irregular habits, since some, though not by any means all, have been intemperate. The drinking of a large quantity of cold water at once, when these symptoms are impending, and the patient already feels a great degree of muscular debility, probably has a decided effect in instantly developing the disease. Cold also to the stomach, in these cases, may sometimes act like a blow in suddenly paralyzing the powers of life.

The rapidity with which the bodies of persons thus dying, pass into putrefaction, and the season of the year, have prevented us from deriving any information by means of dissections. The publicity and alarm that is excited, is generally sufficient to exclude the idea of violence.†

B. *Of persons found dead from hunger.*

The crime of permitting or causing individuals to die from hunger, is no doubt rare in civilized countries. Instances have, however, happened; and an account of the appearances observed after death is therefore proper.

The body is much emaciated, and a fœtid, acrid odour ex-

* Penny Magazine, 1834, p. 348.

† The following are all the authorities that I have been enabled to collect on this subject:

Rush on the disease occasioned by drinking cold water in warm weather, in *Medical Inquiries and Observations*, vol. 1, p. 181, 2d edition.

Dr. Higginson, in *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 3, p. 289.

Dr. Watts, in *New-York Medical and Surgical Register*, p. 81.

Prof. Dickson, in *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 3, p. 262.

Prof. T. D. Mitchell, in *North American Medical and Surg. Journal*, vol. 10, p. 379.

Dr. Brewster, in *Chapman's Journal*, N. S. vol. 2, p. 98.

Dr. Bartlett, in *Boston Medical Magazine*, vol. 3, p. 86, 174.

Most of these writers concur in considering the phenomena as altogether those of apoplexy. New-York, Philadelphia, Boston and Albany, seem to be the places in which most of these sudden deaths occur.

hales from it, although death may have been very recent. The eyes are red and open. This appearance is uncommon from other causes of death. The tongue and throat are dry, even to aridity, and the stomach and intestines are contracted and empty: this last mark has been repeatedly noticed. Haller dissected the body of a person who destroyed himself by hunger, and found the organs in question entirely empty; not the least vestige of fæces was to be seen in the intestines. The gall-bladder is puffed with bile, and this fluid is found scattered over the stomach and intestines, so as to tinge them very extensively. The lungs are withered, but all the other organs are generally in a healthy state. The bloodvessels are usually empty.*

Prof. Horner, in consequence of some observations made by him, is of opinion that the substance of the brain in these cases becomes many shades lighter than natural, showing the destitution of red blood. This is confirmed by a case below.†

There is, however, some distinction to be taken between the effects of death from fasting, or from hunger. The former is slower in its progress, and consequently may occasionally present appearances different on dissection. An Italian writer has recently endeavoured to designate these, and mentions as among the peculiar results of death from hunger, inflammation of the stomach and intestines, and a rapid tendency to putrefaction.‡ Of the two, however, the last is more frequently mentioned than the first.

* Foderé, vol. 2, p. 276; vol. 3, p. 231, who quotes the observations of Morgagni, Redi, Valsalva and Haller.

London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 15, p. 510. Case of death from spontaneous abstinence, by Dr. Desgenettes of Paris. Here the lungs were sound, but the gall-bladder and stomach were in the state described above.

American Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, Art. *Abstinence*, by Dr. Hays. He quotes the case of a prisoner, who, in two months, starved himself to death at Toulouse. The brain was paler than usual; the lungs nearly natural; œsophagus contracted, but not the stomach, which contained a little fluid; the lower portion of the small intestines red, softened, and highly injected; large intestines natural, and containing fecal matter; the gall-bladder much distended with black thick bile; the muscles much attenuated.

In Kelsey's case, (related by Dr. McNaughton, in the Transactions of the Albany Institute, vol. 1, p. 113,) who lived for fifty-three days on water alone, the stomach was loose and flabby, and the mesentery, stomach and intestines extremely thin and transparent; the gall-bladder as in all the preceding cases.

† Horner's Pathological Anatomy, p. 360.

‡ American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 1, p. 472.

Collard de Martigny's experiments on animals tend to elucidate this subject. He starved dogs and rabbits, and the effects were excessive emaciation, and a diminished size and colourless state of the muscles. The heart and large vessels contained but little blood, and the lungs were empty; the viscera generally pale, but the gall-bladder large and distended with limpid, greenish yellow bile; the stomach contracted, as were also the intestines, which last were tinged with bile. In three cases only, out of eighteen, did he find any marks of inflammation in the digestive canal. The quantity of fibrin in the blood was sensibly diminished. He does not seem to have examined the brain.*

Dr. Duncan, whose authority on all subjects connected with the science is of great value, remarked, in a clinical lecture delivered not long before his lamented death, that "it was a matter of notoriety, when persons in health were deprived of their usual food, or when animals were starved for experiment, that the intestines were found inflamed and ulcerated; this circumstance has also been remarked in some recent cases of criminal trials for wilful murder by starvation."†

As several of the signs enumerated are characteristic and peculiar, they will serve to exclude the other causes of violent death.

In 1768, the daughter of a notary at Nevers, in France, aged fifteen, died of an unknown disease. She had been already buried, when it was rumoured abroad that her father had caused her death by hunger. The information laid before the judge was of such a nature, that he directed the arrest of the parent, and the disinterment of the body. This was twenty-four hours after the burial. The report of the medical examiners was as follows:

The whole body is extremely emaciated. The skin is very thin, and its colour livid; an unpleasant odour is exhaled; the eyes are open and red; contusions and excoriations appear on various parts of the body; and the anus and vagina are covered with small white worms in great quantity, and these parts,

* North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 196, 221, (from Magendie's Journal.)

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 6, p. 449.

and particularly the first, are much excoriated and dilated. On opening the body, the stomach was seen in a healthy state, containing a wine glass full of serous, greenish bile; the pylorus was contracted; the duodenum, together with the right side of the ileum and jejunum, was inflamed; the gall-bladder was swelled with bile, and the intestines were entirely empty. The remainder of the viscera, together with those of the thorax and head, were in a healthy state, except that the right lung was a little withered. The report concluded by giving an opinion, that the girl had died in a state of extreme weakness and languor, but it assigned no cause.

Public opinion continued to implicate the parents, and they sought a defender in the celebrated Petit, from whom an answer to the following questions was requested: 1. Whether the facts stated above were sufficient to prove that the child died from hunger? 2. Whether there was any circumstance to indicate that a length of time had elapsed between the death and burial? To both these, he answered in the negative, and for the following reasons: Extreme emaciation is rather a proof of long illness, than of starvation; because it is very common for persons of a tolerable degree of fatness, when they refuse food, to die before they lose much flesh. The emptiness of the intestines was more indicative of colliquative diarrhoea from long disease, than of any other cause. The state of the gall-bladder proved, (in Petit's opinion) nothing on one side or the other, nor did the excoriations, while the natural state of the stomach was an argument against death by famine, since in such cases, that organ is observed to be much contracted. Finally, the worms might have been present in the parts for some time before death, nor was the smell of the body by any means so offensive as to indicate putridity of long standing. On these grounds, though unwilling to assign a cause of death, he was decidedly of opinion that famine had not induced the fatal termination.

It is impossible to read this opinion, and compare it with the observations of anatomists on persons known to have died from hunger, without agreeing with Foderé, that Petit appears rather as the advocate of the accused, than the impartial investigator of truth.

On the trial, it was conclusively proved, that the parents had been guilty of mal-treatment, and though after the opinion of Petit, their lives could not be affected, yet the father was sentenced to the galleys for life, and the mother to perpetual banishment.*

C. Of persons found dead from lightning.

As to death by lightning, it may be remarked, that it is usually distinguished by a variety of appearances. Sometimes the viscera are destroyed, without any external mark being present; while in others, there is nothing but a small hole. Again, there will be great external injury observed: But the most common accompaniments are discoloration of the skin, generally in the form of streaks. These are of a red colour; and it has been remarked, that they are peculiarly to be traced in the direction of the spine. Others again receive wounds, or the integuments are extensively burnt, and blisters form.†

The bodies of those killed in this manner, are generally, but not always, flaccid, and the blood is in a fluid state.

As to the cause of death by lightning, two theories have been maintained. John Hunter supposed that there was an instantaneous and total destruction of the vital principle in every part of the body, and consequently that the muscles are relaxed and incapable of contraction. Hence their flaccidity, the fluidity of the blood, and a rapid tendency to putrefaction. Mr. Brodie, on the other hand, concludes from his experiments that this does not take place; but that in a majority of cases,

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 223. In addition to the references on this subject, I may quote, *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, art. *Abstinence*, by Dr. Marshall Hall. *Copland's Dictionary*, art. *Abstinence*.

A Case by Mr. Griffith, *London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 43, p. 99. *Percival's Essays*, vol. 2, p. 260.

Lancet, N. S., vol. 2, p. 158; vol. 3, p. 486.

Dr. Ogston's Case of Melanosis of the Stomach, *Edin. Med. & Surg. Jour.* v. 38, p. 259.

† In illustration of this, I may refer to the following. The case of Mr. Boddington and his lady, both struck by lightning in England. The injuries received by her, were actual wounds, while his were only burns. (*London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine*, vol. 1, p. 191.) Very extensive burns, with a raising of the epidermis. (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 41, p. 493.) The epidermis nearly destroyed, and the hair burnt, a French case. (*Lancet*, N. S. vol. 6, p. 910.) Two German cases, one with livid streaks, and the other, extensive burns. (*Lancet*, vol. 7, p. 255, 445.) Extensive blistering of the skin. (*New-York Medical and Surgical Register*, p. 55;) Case by Professor Stevens.

the effects of lightning are expended chiefly in disturbing or destroying the functions of the brain. He found the heart acting in an animal apparently dead from an electric shock. In this way also, he explains the many symptoms imitating apoplexy or affections of the head, which arise from injury of this nature.*

In making up an opinion in a doubtful case, much depends on the place and situation where the body is found. If a person be dead in an open place, or under a tree, shortly after a thunder storm, with the ordinary appearances now enumerated, we may attribute his death to lightning; and particularly so, if any metallic substances about him are found melted, and his clothes torn or burnt, while dissection exhibits nothing adverse to the idea.†

D. *Of persons found burnt to death.*

The same circumstances to which we have directed the attention of the examiner in previous sections, are to be noticed in cases of this nature. Dissection, if it be practicable, must not be omitted.

There is an instance related by Foderé, which presents a most instructive lesson. In 1809, a wretch murdered several individuals with an axe, and then set fire to the house. The medical officer did not deem it worth while to examine the bodies, and certified that their death was owing to the fire. Meanwhile an individual was discovered murdered about one hundred paces from the house, and suspicion being excited, the

* Thus Dr. Macauley, (Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 1, p. 360,) found apoplexy to succeed, with all its external appearances, and in two other cases, epilepsy. Mr. Godfrey, Surgeon of the Cambrian, (London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 47, p. 369,) relates of a sailor struck dumb and blind. Deafness is not at all an uncommon result; so also paralysis. Dr. Young (American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 13, p. 54,) and Dr. Stevens, both observed dilated pupils.

† Many cases of death or injury by lightning, together with the appearances observed, are to be found in the Philosophical Transactions. See vol. 1, p. 222, 247; vol. 5, p. 2084; vol. 19, p. 311; vol. 20, p. 5; vol. 21, p. 51; vol. 22, p. 577; vol. 26, p. 137; vol. 33, p. 366; vol. 34, p. 118; vol. 36, p. 444; vol. 48, p. 86; vol. 51, p. 38; vol. 52, p. 515; vol. 62, p. 131; vol. 63, p. 177, 231; vol. 66, p. 493; vol. 71, p. 42; vol. 77, p. 61, 130; vol. 80, p. 293. There is also an interesting account of the celebrated death of Richman, at St. Petersburg, vol. 49, p. 61. Another by Lomonossow, will be found in Dr. Granville's Travels to St. Petersburg, v. 2, p. 112. There was only a red spot on his forehead, the legs were blue, and one shoe was torn, but not burnt.

bodies were disinterred. It was found that the flames had only burnt the flesh superficially, and that the marks of the axe were still distinctly visible.*

So also in the State of Maryland, a few years since, a ruffian murdered a whole family, and then fired the log house in which they lived. On the body of the father, however, a fracture of the skull was found; and in consequence of a bed from the upper room falling on the mother, her body was so far uninjured as to exhibit three incised wounds, one of them penetrating the stomach. The murderer was detected, by finding on him articles of dress belonging to the family.

Apart from the possibility of such cases, it not unfrequently becomes necessary to ascertain whether the burning has happened during life. A person may have been strangled, and the clothes subsequently fired, to present the appearance of accidental death.

A case bearing on this point, occurred, some years since, to the late Dr. Duncan in Scotland. A husband and wife, living on bad terms, were heard to struggle; and after a short time, the neighbours were alarmed by a strong smell of fire. All attempts to enter were for some time fruitless, owing either to the real or pretended deep sleep of the husband. At last, on obtaining admission, the body of the female was seen burning on the hearth. On examination before the coroner, the abdomen was found reduced to a cinder, but on the face and extremities there were marks of reaction; some spots were red and inflamed—others scorched to a hard and transparent crust, but surrounded with distinct redness; and “a great many blisters filled with lymph, perfectly different from those produced on the dead body, which are not filled with a fluid, but with air or vapour. In short, we found (says Dr. Duncan) appearances exactly similar to those of fire on a living body; and therefore we reported, as our unanimous opinion, that the deceased was burnt to death.”

As there was no proof that the prisoner had been the cause, he was found not guilty; and it is indeed possible (although

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 18. Dr. Dunlop (MS. Lectures) mentions a similar case occurring at Glasgow in 1809. A man murdered his wife, and then set fire to her clothes. There were, however, marks of external violence, sufficient to convict him.

there were some suspicious circumstances against him,) that this may have been a case of preternatural combustility, as I shall hereafter describe it. Such indeed is Prof. Christison's opinion — a part of the clothes were unburnt; the chair from which she had fallen was entire, and yet the abdomen was nearly destroyed.

However this may have been, the present case appears to have led Prof. Christison to perform an interesting series of experiments, in order to ascertain the criterions by which a burn inflicted during life, may be distinguished from one produced after death.

From his observations, it follows, that "the only effects of burns which appear immediately after the injury, and remain in the dead body, are, *first*, a narrow line of redness near the burn, not removable by pressure; and *secondly*, blisters filled with serum: that the former is an invariable effect, but that the latter is not always observable when death follows the burn in a few minutes."

In order to meet the inquiry which readily suggests itself, "whether these appearances can be produced or imitated immediately after death, while vitality still lingers in the body, or to use Bichat's phrase, while organic vitality survives the extinction of animal life?" Prof. Christison performed several experiments.

In a stout young man who poisoned himself with laudanum, a very hot poker and a stream of boiling water were applied to the skin of the chest, and inside of the arm, one hour after death. On the next day, no blisters or redness were visible on or near the burns. At the parts burnt with scalding water, the cuticle appeared as if ruffled, and could be very easily rubbed off, but there was not a trace of moisture on the true skin beneath. At the parts burnt with the poker, the whole thickness of the skin was dried up, brownish and translucent, but entirely free of redness or blistering on or around them.

In another case of poisoning where the patient was comatose, heat had been applied four hours before death, and again was applied half an hour after it. The body was examined in thirty-eight hours. Some of the spots burnt during life,

presented a uniform blister filled with serum; and even where the cuticle was gone, and the true skin dried, there were drops of serum, and also particles of the same fluid dried by evaporation: around all of them, also, there was more or less scarlet redness, and this redness was not diminished by pressure. Some of the spots burned after death were charred on the surface, and not elevated: two presented vesications, but the blisters were filled with air; the cuticle over them was dry and cracked, and the surface of the true skin beneath was also quite dry. On the white parts of the skin, there was no adjacent redness, and the lividity which occurs in dead bodies was immediately removed by moderate pressure.

These and other experiments with similar results, led Prof. Christison to the conclusion, that the application of heat to the body, even a few minutes only after death, cannot produce any of the signs of vital reaction mentioned above; and he concludes his observations by remarking, "that, as far as the preceding experiments go, a line of redness near the burn, not removable by pressure, and likewise the formation of blisters filled with serum, are certain signs of a burn inflicted during life."^{*}

There is another question that may arise in cases where persons are found burnt to death, which is alike interesting and curious; and that is, *Can there be such a thing as PRETERNATURAL COMBUSTIBILITY OF THE HUMAN BODY?*† Several cases are recorded of this nature.

It is stated in the Transactions of the Copenhagen Society, that in 1692, a woman of the lower class, who for three years had used spirituous liquors to such excess that she took no other nourishment, having sat down one evening on a straw chair to sleep, was consumed in the night time, so that next morning no part of her was found but the skull, and the extreme joints of the fingers; all the rest of her body was reduced to ashes.‡

^{*} Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 35, p. 320.

† In a former edition, I used the term *spontaneous combustion*, to express this phenomenon; but as that takes for granted what is denied by many, I have preferred the present appellation, the correctness of which, I believe, will not be denied by any who have examined the accumulated testimony on the subject.

‡ Coxe's Emporium of Arts & Sciences, vol. 1, p. 161, from an article entitled "On

The Countess Cornelia Bandi, of Cesena in Italy, aged 62, and in good health, was accustomed to bathe all her body in camphorated spirits of wine. One evening, having experienced a sort of drowsiness, she retired to bed, and her maid remained with her till she fell asleep. Next morning, when the girl entered to wake her mistress, she found nothing but the remains of her body in the most horrible condition. At the distance of four feet from the bed, was a heap of ashes, in which the legs and arms were alone untouched; between the legs lay the head. The brain, together with half the posterior part of the cranium, and the whole chin, had been consumed; three fingers were found in the state of a coal, and the rest of the body was reduced to ashes, which, when touched, left on the fingers a fat, fœtid moisture. A small lamp which stood on the floor, was covered with ashes, and contained no oil; the tallow of two candles was melted on a table, but the wicks still remained, and the feet of the candlesticks were covered with moisture. The bed was not deranged; the bedclothes and coverlid were raised up and thrown on one side, as is the case when a person gets up. The furniture and tapestry were covered with a moist kind of soot of the colour of ashes, which had penetrated into the drawers and dirtied the linen.

This case is related by Bianchini, and confirmed by other writers.*

Grace Pett, the wife of a fishmonger of the parish of St. Clement, Ipswich, aged about sixty, had contracted a habit, which she continued for several years, of coming down from her bed-room every night, half dressed to smoke a pipe. On the 9th of April, 1744, she got up from bed as usual. Her daughter, who slept with her, did not perceive that she was absent till next morning, when she awoke. Soon after this, she put on her clothes, and going down into the kitchen, found her mother stretched out on her right side, with her head near the grate. The body was extended on the hearth, with

the combustion of the human body, produced by the long and immoderate use of spirituous liquors," by Pierre Aime Lair. This essay was originally published in the *Journal de Physique*. In my subsequent quotations from it, I shall for brevity use the word *Lair* only.

* *Lair*, p. 162, who quotes the *Annual Register* for 1763. See also *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 43, p. 447.

the legs on the deal floor, and it had the appearance of a log of wood consumed by a fire, without apparent flame. On beholding the spectacle, the girl ran in great haste and poured over her mother's body some water, to extinguish the fire. The fœtid odour and smoke which exhaled from the body, almost suffocated some of the neighbours who had hastened to the girl's assistance. The trunk was in some measure incinerated, and resembled a heap of coals covered with white ashes. The head, the arms, the legs and the thighs, had also participated in the burning. This woman, it is said, had drank a large quantity of spirituous liquor, in consequence of being overjoyed to hear that one of her daughters had returned from Gibraltar. There was no fire in the grate, and the candle had burnt entirely out in the socket of the candle-stick, which was close to her. There were also found near the consumed body, the clothes of a child, and a paper screen, which had sustained no injury from the fire. Her dress consisted of a cotton gown.*

Le Cat relates the following case, which was communicated to him by M. Boinneau, cure of Plurguer near Dol. It occurred in 1749. Madame De Boiseon, eighty years of age, who had drank nothing but spirits for several years, was sitting in her elbow-chair before the fire, while her waiting-maid went out of the room for a few moments. On her return, seeing her mistress on fire, she immediately gave the alarm, and some persons having come to her assistance, one of them endeavoured to extinguish the flames with his hand, but they adhered to it, as if it had been dipped in brandy, or oil on fire. Water was brought and thrown on her, yet the fire appeared more violent, and was not extinguished till the whole flesh had been consumed. Her skeleton, exceedingly black, remained entire in the chair, which was only a little scorched; one leg only, and the two hands, detached themselves from the rest of the bones. It is not known whether her clothes had caught fire by approaching the grate, but she was in the same place in which she sat every day; there was no extraordinary fire, and she had not fallen.†

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. 43, p. 463.

† Lair, p. 168.

By a letter from Gen. William Shepherd, it appears, that on the 16th of March, 1802, in one of the towns of the state of Massachusetts, the body of an elderly woman disappeared in the space of about one hour and a half. Part of the family had retired to bed, and the rest were gone abroad. The old woman remained awake to take care of the house. Soon after one of the grand-children came home and discovered the floor near the hearth to be on fire. An alarm was given—a light brought, and means taken to extinguish it. While these things were doing, some singular appearances were observed on the hearth and contiguous floor. There was a sort of greasy soot and ashes, with remains of a human body, and an unusual smell in the room. All the clothes were consumed. The fire had been small.*

* Coxe's *Emperium of Arts*, vol. 1, p. 326, who quotes from Tilloch, vol. 14, p. 96. The same case is also mentioned by Foderé, vol. 3, p. 208. I have cited the cases in the text, not so much with reference to their peculiar features, as their geographical position. There is a case respectively from Denmark, Italy, England, France, and America. Several other instances are on record, to which I refer the reader for further details. They are,

1. Mary Clues, aged fifty, at Coventry, (Eng.) *Wilmer*, *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 64, p. 340.
2. An anonymous case, by Vicq D'Azyr, of a woman aged fifty years.
3. A case by Henry Bohanser, of a female at Paris.
4. The wife of Sieur Millet, at Rheims, in 1725, related by Le Cat.
5. Mary Jauffret, at Aix in Provence, related by Murairé, a surgeon, in the *Journal de Médecine*.
6. Mademoiselle Thuars, at Caen, in 1782, related by Merille, a surgeon, in the *Journal de Médecine*.
7. Two anonymous cases of females at Caen.

All these are mentioned by Lair:

8. An anonymous case of a female at Paris in 1779. Foderé, vol. 3, p. 207.
9. The Priest Bertholi, in 1776, in Italy. This is a very remarkable case, and some particulars mentioned by Battaglia, the surgeon who attended him, may with propriety be added in this place. Bertholi was travelling about the country, and at evening arrived at the house of his brother-in-law. He immediately desired to be shewn to his apartment, and when brought to it, requested that a handkerchief should be placed between his shirt and shoulders. This was done, and he was left to his devotions. A few minutes had scarcely elapsed, before a noise was heard in his room, and the cries of the priest were particularly distinguished. On entering the room, he was found extended on the floor, and surrounded by a light flame, which receded as they approached, and finally vanished. On the next morning, M. Battaglia was called and examined the patient. He found the integuments of the right arm almost entirely detached from the flesh, and between the shoulders and thighs the integuments were injured. There was a mortification of the right hand, and this, in spite of scarification, rapidly extended itself. The patient complained of burning thirst, and was horribly convulsed; he passed by stool putrid bilious matter, and was exhausted with continual vomiting, accompanied with fever and delirium. On the fourth day, after two hours comatose insensibility, he expired, and a short time previous to his death, M. Battaglia observed with astonishment, that the body exhaled a most insufferable

Some deductions are drawn from these cases, by Drs. Laird and Marc, which it is proper to mention. 1. The subjects

odour—worms crawled from it on the bed, and the nails had become detached from the left hand.

The account of the patient was, that he felt a stroke like the blow of a cudgel on the right hand, and at the same time, saw a bluish flame attack his shirt, which was immediately reduced to ashes, the wristbands in the mean while remaining totally untouched. The handkerchief between the shoulders and shirt was entire, and free from any trace of burning. His breeches were also uninjured, but though not a hair of his head was burnt, yet his cap was entirely consumed. There had been no fire in the room, except that the lamp, which had been full of oil, was now dry, and its wick reduced to a cinder. Foderé, vol. 3, p. 210. London Medical Repository, vol. 1, p. 332.

10. A female at Paris, in 1834, aged sixty-eight, related by Dr. Vigné. Foderé, vol. 3, p. 216.

11. A female in France, aged 28, communicated by Dr. Prouteau, in *Leroux's Journal de Médecine*. New-England Journal, vol. 4, p. 194.

12. Mrs. Laire, at Saulieu, in 1808, aged 60 years. Ballard, p. 414.

13. Ignatius Meyer, aged 48, in the village of Waertelfeld, bailiwick of Schwabenberg in Germany. This occurred on the 17th of January, 1811. Meyer was a very intemperate man. The parts of the body under the bed clothes were not affected. This case is related by Dr. Scherf of Detmold. London Medical Repository, vol. 3, p. 239. New-York Medical Repository, vol. 18, p. 87.

14. Mrs. P——, aged 90, and her servant aged 60, at Nevers in France, on the 15th of January, 1820. Case by Dr. Charpentier, London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 45, p. 347.

15. M. Vatin, at Beauvais, (France,) aged upwards of 60. This happened in January, 1822. He was corpulent and intemperate. Related by Drs. Colson and Lefarge in Journal Compliment. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 653, vol. 22, p. 233. American Medical Recorder, vol. 6, p. 764.

16. Margaret Heins, at Hamburg, January, 1825. This case somewhat resembles Bertholi's. From Hecker's Annalen. Edinburgh Med. & Surg. Jour. vol. 26, p. 215.

17. Mrs. Soret, aged 57, in December 31, 1825; occurred at Rouen, and related by Dr. Hellis. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 9, p. 544.

18. A case of combustion of both hands, from attempting to extinguish the clothes of a brother, which were on fire. A blue flame continued for several hours over the parts, and it required constant immersion in water to extinguish it. Dr. DeBrus, in Archives Generales for March, 1829. Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Jour. vol. 32, p. 227.

19. A female, at Lexington, Kentucky, November 15, 1829. Case by Prof. Short. Transylvania Journal, vol. 3, p. 143.

20. Four cases in Ireland within the present century; two in Dublin, one at Limerick, and the other at Coote Hill, county of Cavan. All were females and intemperate. Related by Dr. Apjohn. Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine, art. Combustion, spontaneous.

21. The case of Jane Lappiter, an aged woman, *very temperate*, occurring at Cheltenham, (England,) a few years since, is related by Dr. Newell, in Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 1, p. 248. A portion of the bones and the whole of the viscera were reduced to ashes. The fire extended to within about three inches of the ankle joint, and yet neither the shoe, the stocking or the skin and flesh below was injured. Paris mentions that Plouquet enumerates 28 cases in his *Literaria Medica*. The greater number, I presume, are not contained in the above list.

“The following is the latest, and consequently best authenticated, case on record. After this, it is to be hoped that we shall hear nothing more of the excess of incredulity on this subject, which M. Foderé asserts is the great bar to philosophical discovery in the present age.

“Another case, which occurred in the neighbourhood of Bourdeaux, in September, 1822, has been related in the last volume of the *Nouveau Journal de Médecine*; but

were nearly all females; and they were far advanced in life. The Countess of Cesena, was 62, Mary Clues 52, Grace Pett 60, Madame de Boiseon 80, and M. Thuars more than 60. 2. Most of the individuals had for a long time made an immoderate use of spirituous liquors, and they were either very fat or very lean. 3. The combustion occurred accidentally, and often from a slight cause, such as a candle, a coal, or even a spark. 4. The combustion proceeded with great rapidity, usually consuming the entire trunk, while the extremities, as the feet and hands, were occasionally left uninjured. 5. Water, instead of extinguishing the flames, which proceeded from the parts on fire, sometimes gave them more activity. 6. The fire did very little damage, and often did not affect the combustible objects which were in contact with the human body at the moment when it was burning. 7. The combustion of these bodies left as a residuum, fat fœtid ashes, with an unctuous, stinking and very penetrating soot. 8. The combustions have occurred at all seasons, and in northern as well as southern countries.*

As to the cause of this remarkable phenomenon, various opinions have been promulgated, which I shall very briefly state. Lair and others suppose that there is an alcoholic impregnation of the body, and that the actual contact of fire is necessary to produce it. To this, it is replied, that there is no proof of such a saturation of the organs, and if it were so, it would not, judging from comparative experiments, render

though the particulars were sworn to before a magistrate, our readers will not be at a loss to discover good reasons for doubting its authenticity. A sober, healthy blacksmith was returning home in company with a girl one very hot afternoon, when he suddenly felt an acute pain in the right index, and was astonished to behold it burning and smoking. He rubbed it against his thumb to extinguish the flame, but the flame, caught both the thumb and middle finger. He then rubbed them on his trowsers, but burnt two holes in them; next, he thrust his hand into his pocket, and set it on fire too; and finally, he happened to touch the fore and middle finger of the left hands when these caught fire also. In vain did he plunge them into a bucket of water; they continued to burn. In vain did he stick them in the mud; the virtue of the mud was not more potent. At last, a devout female reminded him that faith saves us; he dipped them in holy water, and the flames were speedily extinguished. Since the well known story of the priest Bertholi, (see Foderé's *Med. Leg.* vol. 3, p. 210,) this is the only instance of alleged spontaneous combustion, where the sufferer has been seen during life. The most amusing of the whole story is, that the relator doubts none of the circumstances, except the efficacy imparted to the water by its sanctification."

DUNLOP.

* Lair, p. 171. Foderé, vol. 3, p. 217.

the body combustible. Julia Fontenelle immersed pieces of meat for a length of time, in alcohol, but on firing it, their external surface alone was scorched.

Another theory, supported by Maffei, Le Cat, Kopp, and others, refers the combustion to the agency of the electric fluid. Marc, however, appreciating the weakness of such an opinion, has endeavoured to fortify it by supposing that inflammable gases may accumulate in the cellular tissue, and thus render the body predisposed to this state, and in a system charged with ideo-electricity, the slightest inflammable substance may commence the combustion. The gas he deems to be hydrogen and its compounds, and thus explains why water often fails to extinguish it, and why, also, contiguous substances are so seldom injured, the heat required for its inflammation being low. It is difficult, however, on this hypothesis, to explain the rapidity of the combustion, and the complete reduction of the body or its parts to ashes. Julia Fontenelle, after expressing his disbelief in either of the above, refers it to an internal decomposition, and the formation of new products, which are highly inflammable. If to this, we add the opinion favoured by Professor Apjohn, that phosphuretted hydrogen may be generated in the system, an explanation is presented, which will almost justify the term in common use, of spontaneous combustion.

I must, however, refer the curious reader to the references below, and proceed to point out how these cases differ from the effects of ordinary combustion.*

* See the elaborate article of Marc on *Spontaneous Combustion*, in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Medicales*, vol. 6, translated by Dr. Drake in his *Western Journal*, vol. 1, p. 130; Julia Fontenelle's memoir, in *Jameson's New Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, vol. 5, p. 164; *Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine*, Art. *Combustion, spontaneous*, by Dr. Apjohn; *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 39, p. 416; *American Medical Recorder*, vol. 5, p. 483, where the alcoholic theory is defended by Dr. Thomas D. Mitchell; and *Transylvania Journal*, vol. 7, p. 128, where it is opposed by Dr. Caldwell.

A dissection by Dr. Bally is deemed corroborative of the opinion advanced by Marc. He attended a case of typhus, accompanied with general emphysema; and after death, gas was found in large quantities in the cavity of the peritoneum, and even the vessels of the pia mater contained air. This gas, from whatever part it was extricated by puncture, took fire on bringing a candle to it, and burnt with a blue flame. (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 36, p. 221.)

The existence of oil in the serum of the blood, first noticed, I believe, by Professor Traill, and nearly altogether in persons intemperate, has also been supposed to illustrate the combustibility of the system. See Traill in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, vol. 13, p. 375; *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 24, p. 421.

We are authorized in asserting, both from the history of ancient nations who employed this mode of sepulture, and the narratives of the martyrs and others burnt to death, that large quantities of fuel are needed to convert the body to ashes. It is necessarily *slow* in its progress, and the heat required being high, would extend itself to surrounding substances. The combustion also, in ordinary cases, would often be incomplete, and particularly so as to the bones. Again, if the body be not wholly unconsumed, there will be blisters, scars, &c. on various parts.

How strikingly this differs from the phenomena mentioned above, I need scarcely urge. The empyreumatic odour, and the moist and sooty matter resting on the furniture and walls, are wanting; and if Fontenelle be correct, a still more striking distinction occurs. In these cases of preternatural combustibility, the hair, the most combustible part in the human frame, is never burnt, while the liver and spleen are always so.

The application of these distinctions in medico-legal cases, is manifest; and there is one instance on record, which justifies the notice that I have taken of the subject.

The case is related by Le Cat, and is that of the wife of the Sieur Millet, at Rheims. She got intoxicated every day, and the domestic economy of the house was managed by a handsome young female. This woman was found consumed on the 20th of February, 1725, at the distance of a foot and a half from the hearth in her kitchen. A part of the head only, with a portion of the lower extremities and a few of the vertebræ, had escaped combustion. A foot and a half of the flooring under the body had been consumed; but a kneading trough and a tub, which were very near the body, sustained no injury. M. Chretien, a surgeon, examined the remains of the body with every juridical formality. Jean Millet, the husband, being interrogated by the judges, declared, that about eight in the evening of the 19th of February, he had retired to rest with his wife, who, not being able to sleep, had gone into the kitchen, where he thought she was warming herself; that

also Dr. Adam in Transactions of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta, vol. 1, p. 74. Dr. B. G. Babington (Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 16,) appears to have detected an oil as constantly existing in healthy blood.

having fallen asleep, he was awakened about two o'clock by an infectious odour; and that having run to the kitchen, he found the remains of his wife, in the state described in the report of the physicians and surgeons. The judges formed an opinion that he had conspired with his servant to destroy the wife, and he was condemned to death. On appeal, however, to a higher court, this decree was reversed, and it was pronounced a case of human combustion; but his health and fortune were irreparably destroyed, and he died in a hospital.*

E. *Of persons found dead from wounds.*

The observations already made in the section on medico-legal dissection, and the necessity of considering the subject of wounds on the living body in a distinct chapter, will necessarily contract the remarks that I have to make under this head.

I must again urge the importance of a medical examination in all these cases. An instance mentioned by Foderé, will show how culpable any neglect on this point may become. A dead body was found in the fields, in the arrondissement of of Trevoux, during the month of May, 1811. The surgeon, deterred by the putrefactive smell, reported generally that he had discovered no marks of violence. Meanwhile some ditchers, on interring the body, remarked that, *on the fall of a handkerchief which covered the head*, the bones of the cranium detached themselves, and the brain issued out. The imperial attorney ordered a special examination of the head, and it was found that the deceased had received three blows with a cutting instrument, which separated the parietal bones from the skull. The assassins, after committing the crime, had replaced these, and secured them with a handkerchief bound very tight; they were afterwards discovered and punished.*

* Lair, p. 167. Dupuytren would seem to have been a sturdy disbeliever. He asserts, that frequently, when dissecting, he put the debris of the human body in the fire at evening, and they were all consumed in the morning. As to the cases, he imagines that being all fat, and in a state of insensibility from drunkenness, their clothes take fire, and the carbonic acid thus produced increases the asphyxia; while the skin being burnt, the fat melts and runs out, and thus the process of destruction goes on. Without derogating from his acknowledged talents, I will only add, that Dupuytren was a better surgeon and anatomist than chemist. His remarks are contained in the North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 10, p. 181.

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 72.

It is important to understand that in legal medicine, the term *wound* is used in a much more comprehensive sense than in surgery. In the latter it means, strictly, only a solution of continuity; in the former, injuries of every description that affect either the hard or the soft parts; and accordingly under it are comprehended bruises, contusions, fractures, luxations, &c. In this sense, then, the term wound is to be understood in this work.

The important question to be decided in every case of persons found dead from wounds, is, whether the *wounds are the result of suicide, accident, or homicide.*

Besides noticing the surface of the body, and ascertaining whether ecchymosis or suggillation be present, we should pay great attention to the following circumstances: The situation in which the wounded body is found, the position of its members and the state of its dress, the expression of countenance, the marks of violence, if any be present on the body, the redness or suffusion of the face. The last is important as it may indicate violence, in order to stop the cries of the individual. The quantity of blood on the ground or on the clothes should be noticed, and in particular, the probable weapon used, the nature of the wound and its depth and direction. In a case of supposed suicide, by means of a knife or pistol, the course of the wound should be examined, whether it be upwards or downwards, and the length of the arm should be compared with the direction of the injury. Ascertain whether the right or left arm has been used; and as the former is most commonly employed, the direction should correspond with it, and be from right to left.*

When a wound is alleged to have been committed by accident, we may inquire into the probability of this by com-

* "By observing this law of nature, murder by another person, instead of *felo de se*, has been detected, as by the discovery of the impression of a bloody left hand upon the *left* arm of the deceased. So the murderer, Patch, was convicted, partly by the proof that the loaded pistol must have been discharged by a left handed person, and that Patch was left handed." (Chitty's Medical Jurisprudence, p. 37.)

"In Patch's case the evidence went to show that the murder was committed by means of a pistol shot by a left handed man. Sergeant Best in a conference with the prisoner before the trial, pressed him to say whether he was left handed, but he protested that he was not: yet, on the trial, being called to plead and to hold up his hand, he answered *not guilty*, and held up his left hand." (Dr. A. T. Thomson, London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 454.)

paring the stature of the body with the person who caused the accident, and thus ascertain whether the wound could have been received in its existing direction.* The place where the accident has happened, and a comparison of the instrument with the injury inflicted, may also give useful light.

It has at various times been a subject of anxious discussion, whether there are any proofs to be drawn from the nature of the wound, discriminative of the injured individual falling on the weapon, or of it having been thrust into him. This question was put to the medical faculty of Giessen under the following circumstances: On the 29th of November, 1685, at night, J. Scheffer of Arheilgen, was found dead in the city of Giessen. The examiners discovered a wound in the right side, two fingers' breadth below the nipple and between the second and third ribs. It penetrated through the muscles, the superior lobe of the right side of the lungs, the pericardium and the vena cava, to the left side of the lungs.

The accused said that the deceased had rushed on his sword. The companions of the latter were throwing stones, and with his drawn sword he ran forward to the prisoner, and falling, met his fatal wound. The fiscal on the other hand denied the possibility of this. The deceased was not thrust through the body, but the wound was inflicted on the right side, a position in which he could not have been placed unless he had run side-ways.

The medical faculty of Giessen on being consulted, answered in favor of the prisoner for the following reasons: The deceased was drunk and in a great rage, and the motion which the French call the *passade*, might have inflicted the wound while he was rushing with great fury on his antagonist.†

* Two men of different height fought a duel some years since at Marseilles, with swords, on a public walk. The weapon of each reached the heart of the other at the same moment, and they fell dead together. On examining their bodies, the wound given by the small man was found to be directed from below upwards, and that by the larger from above downwards. (Foderé, vol. 3, p. 196.)

† Valentini's Pandects, vol. 1, p. 240. In the London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 31, p. 467, an anonymous correspondent remarks, that in the account of the late trial of Major Gordon for the murder of a private soldier, by holding in his hand

Foderé quotes another case from Kopp illustrative of this question. "A miller was assassinated at his own door by a butcher, who pretended that he had no intention of killing him, but had only threatened him with his knife, in consequence of some maltreatment which he had received: that the miller renewed the attack, and in attempting to pursue him, made a false step and had fallen on the weapon. A single external wound which led downward to two wounds of the left ventricle of the heart, separated from each other by an interval of two lines, showed that the accused had employed the same method to destroy his victim as that used by butchers in Germany to kill cattle; that is, after having driven the knife into the heart, they withdraw it some distance and replunge it, so as to make a second internal wound. Thus the direction of the wound compared with the respective statures of the two adversaries, (the butcher being much smaller than the miller,) proved that the blow had been inflicted obliquely from above downwards, viz: While the miller was sitting at his door, and not by a fall after getting on his feet, in which case the wound must have taken an opposite direction."*

Stephen Videto was, in July, 1825, tried at the court of oyer and terminer for Franklin county, (New-York,) for the murder of Mrs. Fanny Mosely.

It appeared that Mrs. Mosely had been married to a worthless individual in Canada. Shortly after her union, he brought her from her parents, under pretence of visiting his, to a tavern at the town of French Mills, and there deserted her, taking with him all her property. In this destitute situation, she applied herself with assiduity to the tailoring business, and finally accumulated some hundred dollars, with which she purchased a small farm.

In March, 1824, she went to reside at the house of the

a sword, on which the deceased fell, it is stated that Messrs. Snowden and Blake gave medical evidence, and they deposed that from the appearance of the wound, they would take upon themselves to declare, that it must have been inflicted by the body falling upon the sword, and not occasioned by a thrust of the weapon. The writer solicits information as to the mode of discriminating between these.

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 196. I am indebted to Dr. Beatty for this reference, which escaped me in the previous edition.

prisoner's father. The family then consisted of his father and mother, a brother and sister, the prisoner and the deceased. The house consisted of two ground rooms, one called the kitchen in which the old people slept, and the bed room at the west side of the house. In this last there was one window at the west side, and another at the north end, a little east of the centre. At the north east corner of the room stood the bed of the prisoner, with whom the brother slept, and at the north west corner, that of the deceased with whom the sister was a bed-fellow. The heads of both beds were to the north, and there was a space of about one yard between them, in which a screen or curtain was usually hung. It was also shown, that the bed of the deceased was more than one foot lower than the bottom of the window.

In January, 1825, the prisoner asserted that he had seen armed Indians about the house in the night time, and he supposed that they harboured hostile designs against him. Under this pretence, (for no other person had seen them,) he borrowed a pistol and two guns and provided himself with ammunition.

On the 1st of February, the brother and sister were both absent from home, and of course the prisoner and deceased were left alone. The prisoner asserted that he was watching during the night, from the apprehension of an attack, and sat up in bed, with his gun lying across his lap. While thus employed, a gun was suddenly thrust through the north window and discharged at Mrs. Mosely, who was then asleep. He immediately fired his gun out of the same window, but saw no one.

Such was his account. It was found on examination, that the ball entered the back of the deceased near the spine, a little above the left hip, and passed out near the left breast, nearer to the head than it entered. She died of the wound in two hours. The window, consisting of fifteen lights, had six broken in the lower sash. *The broken sash and almost all the fragments of glass were on the outside of the house.* The ball was found in the covering over the deceased. Mrs. Mosely mentioned before her death, that she lay in bed with

her head to the north, her face to the west, and her body bent forward considerably.

On dissection, the lowest rib was found cut square off, at an inch or an inch and a half, from the spine. There was, therefore, no glancing. The lower lobe of the left lung and the heart were perforated by the ball and shot.

The examining physicians placed the body in the position above described, on the bed, and then placed persons on the outside of the house, to ascertain whether a ball from a gun would reach her as stated by the prisoner. It was found that she must have lain in a most unnatural posture, in order to be reached, namely, that of a person vomiting. Her account was very different.

It also appeared on the trial, that the prisoner had purchased arsenic, and probably given it to the deceased, whose health had for some time previous been in a declining state.

Videto was found guilty and executed, asserting, however, his innocence to the last.

The solution of this case remains to be given. It is the usual sequence of seduction and murder. On the dissection of the body, the murdered female was found to be pregnant. This fact was known to the district attorney, but from a regard to the feelings of the relatives of the murdered person, it was not brought in testimony. Videto confessed that he was the seducer, to Judge (now Chancellor) Walworth, before whom he was tried, a few days after his conviction.*

Not only the course of the wound is thus to be noticed, but some attention should be paid to the known comparative strength of the parties. In a recent case in England, a feeble old man aged upwards of seventy years, was accused, on the testimony of a very suspicious witness, of having killed an individual aged twenty-four, by two or three blows on the head with a common stick. On dissection, the skull was found *broken into thirty-five pieces*. I do not know the result of the accusation; but several experiments were performed on the dead body, distinctly proving that, even with a loaded stick,

* For a perusal of this trial and the additional facts mentioned, I am indebted to the kindness of chancellor Walworth.

such extensive injury could not be effected after nine or ten blows.*

We must also recollect, that cases like the following may occur. In 1808, during a quarrel among some drovers at an inn in France, one was wounded with a knife on the face, hand, and upper part of the thorax near the right clavicle. When the riot ended, the injuries were examined, and found to be superficial and slight. They were washed, and an hour afterwards, the wounded individual departed for his home. He was, however, found dead the next morning, bathed in blood. Dissection was made, and the left lung and pulmonary artery were found cut. The surgeons deposed that this was the cause of death, and that it must have been inflicted after the superficial wound on the thorax, which was not bloody, but surrounded by ecchymosis. Such proved to be the fact; on his way home, he had been robbed and murdered.†

Again, an intoxicated individual was severely beaten, but was able to walk a mile and a half, to call on his physician, Dr. Davat. He did not speak, but continued in one position; allowed his comrades to tell the circumstances; and when they left, followed them, without staggering or receiving any assistance. This was at six in the evening; after which, he continued with them until nine, when he fell, and became comatose, and continued so in spite of medical assistance, until one o'clock P. M. the time of his death.

The body was examined in forty-eight hours after. There was no ecchymosis, scratch, or contusion on the surface of the body. Although, however, the scalp appeared perfectly natural, yet on cutting into it, the cellular tissue was seen infiltrated with black blood, and two large fractures of the parietal bone were discovered; blood was also collected between it and the dura mater. The viscera were healthy, but there was a longitudinal laceration of the diaphragm, two inches and a half in extent; and the herniated portion of the stomach was also ruptured, and had discharged its contents into the thorax. Small clots of blood accompanied the effused aliments.

* Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 2, p. 358.

† Chaussier, Recueil, p. 139.

The question immediately arose, whether the deceased had sustained all these lesions when he was seen by Dr. Davat in the evening, one hour after the injury. As to the fractures of the skull, there could be no doubt but that they were the consequence of blows; but could the diaphragm be thus ruptured, and the patient survive nineteen hours? Was it not rather owing to a fall without violence; or, as Dr. Davat supposes, occurring either immediately previous to death, or possibly directly after it? At all events, so far as experience extends, we may doubt whether such rupture of the diaphragm and stomach are compatible with life beyond a very brief period.

On the trial, the accused had the benefit of these doubts; and although found guilty, was only sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.*

When a person is found dead at the foot of a precipice, or appears to have fallen from any height, we should naturally expect, that fractures, irregular wounds and contusions, would be present.

Madmen and suicides, it must be remembered, often inflict the most painful and extraordinary wounds on themselves. In suspected cases, we should ascertain the previous history of the deceased, his state of mind, and worldly situation. The countenance should also be noticed. In suicides, it is usually haggard, the eyes are sunk, and this physiognomy continues while a spark of vitality remains in the body. Those, on the contrary, who are the victims of assassination, have a degree of paleness and fear imprinted on their visage.†

These directions, though they may appear minute, are notwithstanding important, in consequence of the difficulty of the subject, and the fact that there is scarcely any description of wound which may not be inflicted by an individual on himself. Some, however, may be excepted, as when a person has been wounded by a small and sharp-pointed instrument in the spinal marrow, and generally indeed all wounds from behind.

Fire-arms are frequently used as an instrument of death,

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 43, p. 499, from the *Archives G n rales*. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 26, p. 529.

† Foder , vol. 3, p. 181 to 188.

and here some inference may be drawn from the nature of the wound. If the ball has passed through the body, it is probable that the murderer was near, or that the individual inflicted it on himself. We cannot, however, rest much on this fact, since a great deal will depend on the strength of the charge and the resistance offered by the parts of the body. The direction is of more importance. "It may be taken for granted," says Dr. Smith, "that if the weapon has been introduced into the deceased's mouth and there discharged, it has not been done by another." Conceding this, it must also be recollected, that a suicide *may* inflict a wound on himself from behind. A man at Paris, after some years of insanity, shut himself in his chamber, from which was shortly heard the discharge of a pistol. On entering the room, he was found barely alive, with a wound behind the right mastoid apophysis, and the occipital bone fractured and broken. He survived two hours, and on dissection, the ball was found lodged in the cerebellum. It was evident that the pistol had been fired with the right hand placed behind the head, and probably the head was inclined to the left.*

An examination of the entrance and exit wound is also important, in enabling us to determine the direction. "That made on entering is smaller, and has its edges inverted and depressed, while the latter is much larger, with ragged, everted and uneven edges—a circumstance depending upon the direction in which the force is applied to the skin, as well as upon the diminished velocity of the ball. When flat bones are perforated by balls, the same difference in the size and appearance of the two openings is to be observed. A trial, in which the defence rested upon the difference between the wounds, took place a few years ago in Kent, and is recorded by Dr. Gordon Smith. An officer in the preventive service was indicted for the murder of a man who was shot in the night, under circumstances of a suspicious nature as to his pursuit at the time. There was no doubt that he was in company with a party of smugglers, and came by his death accidentally. He was retreating before the prisoner, who tripped,

* Case by Dr. Dance, Orfila's *Leçons*, 2nd edition, vol. 2, p. 543.

and in the fall his gun went off. It seems that, on the other hand, several shots were fired by the smugglers on their retreat, and that the deceased was killed by one of them. This appeared from the testimony of a navy surgeon, who examined the body. He found the wound in the upper part of the groin much smaller than that in the lower part of the buttock, which was twice or three times the size of the former, and was ragged and uneven. Fragments of the bone were likewise felt at the hinder opening, but none in the cavity of the pelvis. From these appearances, he gave his opinion that the ball had entered in front, and had come from his own party."*

In a French medical journal, there is stated the following case, as occurring a few years since.

An old man was fired at from a deep ditch on the road side, during a thick fog, and killed on the spot. A near relative, who was successor to his property, and whose menaces and conduct for some time previous were of an alarming nature, was suspected of the murder and arrested. It was proved that a few minutes before the murder was committed, he was seen very near the fatal spot with a fowling piece in his hand. On inspection by the surgeons, it was found that death had been occasioned by two balls, one of which cut the aorta across and the other passed through the ileum. The hole in the ileum was perfectly circular, and when accurately measured, was found to be eight lines in diameter. The calibre of the prisoner's fowling piece, (the only arms in his posses-

* *Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine. Art. Persons dead from wounds*, by Dr. Beatty, vol. 4, p. 561.

Another instance is given in the English state trials. Richard Annesley was tried for the murder of Thomas Eglestone, a poacher. The prisoner was in company with the game-keeper, and he asserted that his gun had gone off accidentally, in attempting to secure the deceased. It appeared from the evidence of the surgeon, that the direction of the wound was upwards, and consequently the fowling piece had not been levelled from the shoulder. The jury brought in a verdict of chance medley. (Paris, vol. 2, p. 126.)

In a duel fought at Paris in 1827, with pistols, the person killed was much taller than his antagonist, yet the mortal wound was obliquely downwards. Suspicion was excited, and an investigation made by Breschet, Denis and Pressat. The ball was found to have struck the clavicle obliquely, and in consequence of its resistance, to have thus deviated. They added in their report, that they had witnessed many analogous cases. (Briand, 2nd edition, p. 298.)

sion,) was found to be only six and a half lines in diameter. This circumstance at once set the prisoner at liberty.

Some time after this, however, an old officer committed suicide by means of a cavalry pistol. The ball perforated the parietal bone, traversed the brain, &c. The hole where it entered was perfectly circular, and when accurately measured, was found not only greatly to exceed the calibre of the pistol, but in fact, to admit, without much force, the barrel of the pistol itself.*

We have recently been favoured with some remarks by Baron Dupuytren on this subject. He observes, that when the gun has been discharged close to the wounded part, the opening by which the ball enters is smaller than that by which it makes its exit, but if at a distance, so that the ball is nearly spent, then the reverse will be observed. The canal made in the former case will be conical. The hole made by a ball in clothes is always smaller than that in the skin.† It is hardly necessary to remind the young surgeon that balls frequently take remarkably circuitous routes.‡

The following observations of the late Professor Staughton will also throw considerable light on this subject. After stating that Dr. Hennen is the first who noticed that balls will course along *concave* as well as *convex* surfaces, as, for instance, between the pleura costalis and the lungs, he proceeds to point out the striking difference between the effects of a *musket* and a *rifle* ball. "The motion of a musket ball, independently of its projectile course on its own axis, is at right angles with its direction. Hence when a musket ball strikes the flesh, the hole made is smaller, to all appearance, than the ball itself. The barrel of the American rifle, on the other hand, is grooved, not in a longitudinal direction, as the French and German

* Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 5, p. 504, from the *Gazette de Sante* of January, 1824.

† London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 3, p. 133. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 25, p. 291.

‡ The most singular instance is that mentioned by Dr. Hennen; the ball struck the breast and lodged in the scrotum, the man standing erect in the ranks. Some times the tortuous course of the ball may be traced by a dusky line, but even this is not always present. The inference is obvious, in cases of wounds, not to pronounce an injury fatal until we are sure that the ball has penetrated. (Dr. A. T. Thomson, London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 325.)

rifles, but in a spiral manner. The ball is forced down so tightly, that as it passes out, it is under the necessity of following the course of the spiral groove. This imparts to it a motion on its own axis, corresponding with the direction of its course. Besides, the whole ball follows a spiral direction, forming in its progress a hollow cylinder, if I may be permitted the expression. Hence the *ragged hole*, which our hunters know so well, is always much larger than the ball. Hence the rifle ball, at full momentum, does not, like the musket ball, remove a cylinder of muscle and bone, but by its rotary motion, tears the flesh and shatters the bone. Hence, too, unless the ball is nearly spent, it never glances.”*

Collateral circumstances will also throw some light on cases of this nature. Two have lately happened, the one in England, and the other in France, where the wadding was examined, and discovered to have been torn from paper found in the possession of the murderer.† Again, a man was found shot, and his own pistol lay near him, from which circumstance, (and no person having been seen to enter or leave the house of the deceased,) it was concluded that he had destroyed himself; but on examining the ball by which he had been killed, it was found too large ever to have entered that pistol: in consequence of which discovery, suspicion fell upon the real murderers.‡ Authors have also mentioned the discolouration of the fingers from the combustion of the powder in the pan, as a mark of suicide, but a crafty assassin might also have recourse to it.§

Again, it is a common remark, says Orfila, that the presence of two or more mortal wounds in various parts of the body, is a decisive proof of homicide, on the presumption that an individual having already inflicted one on himself, has not the strength to produce the second. Although correct as a

* Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences, vol. 4, p. 380.

† Smith, p. 280.

‡ Ibid.

§ Such of my chemical readers as are curious on the subject, I will refer to the *Annales D'Hygiene*, vol. 11, p. 458, where an account is given of Mr. Boutigny's experiments to determine the period which may have elapsed after the discharge of a piece of fire-arms. There is a translation of the same, by Mr. Fisher, from the *Journal de Chimie Medicale*, in the *Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy*, vol. 6, p. 207. See also *Baltimore Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 1, p. 501.

general rule, it must be taken with exceptions, and particularly so if the first wound be not of a nature to produce instant death. A determined suicide may, in the few moments of existence, repeat the blows on himself. The following instance is given by our author, on the authority of Dr. Vingtrinier of Rouen. Mr. G. was found dead in his chamber, with two pistols, one near his body, and the other on the bed, at the distance of six paces. An inquest proved that the first pistol was fired when he was on the bed; that it had broken two ribs and wounded the lung. In spite of this severe injury, Mr. G. had gone into a neighboring room, obtained the other pistol, and discharged it through his head. This produced instant death.*

The narrative of a few cases will form a proper commentary on the above remarks. I commence with one that was undoubtedly accidental.

On the 8th of February, 1792, S. D. aged about thirty years, and of a robust constitution, became intoxicated at an inn near Morges in Switzerland, and in a room heated very warm by a German stove. At eleven o'clock at night, he left this place quite drunk, in order to return home, which was at the distance of half a league. The weather was cold, and the ground covered with snow. The next morning this man was found dead at the side of a ditch, within a small distance from his dwelling. A report soon circulated that he had been assassinated, and a medical man, who saw the body, asserted the certainty of it. The supposed murderer was already pointed out, when Dr. Desgranges, who then resided at Morges, was ordered to inspect the body.

No traces of injury were found, nor indeed any contusions, until in turning the head from the left to the right side, an oblique wound, about three quarters of an inch externally, was discovered, situated below the under jaw, and nearly at the top of the larynx. On introducing the little finger into this aperture, its size internally was found greater than its external appearance indicated. Its depth was about one inch, and extended to the œsophagus and top of the trachea. The

* Orfila's *Legons*, 1st edition, vol. 1, p. 717.

clothes of the deceased were stained with blood, as was also the snow on which he lay.

As the wound which presented itself did not resemble any inflicted by ordinary instruments, Dr. Desgranges was led to the opinion, that the injury was caused by a kind of auger, which the deceased had taken with him from the tavern, and which he had held under his arm, with the handle backwards. This was found lying at the side of the man, covered with clotted blood. The truth of the conjecture was confirmed by opening the wound, and putting the auger into it, when it was found to apply completely. On further dissection, it was ascertained that the left carotid had been wounded, and that hence the immediate cause of death had been the hæmorrhage from it. These facts seemed to decide the question as to its being an accident, and it was also supposed, that in endeavouring to remove the auger on which he had fallen, he had moved it round, and thus made the internal wound larger than the external.*

In 1813, some excitement was caused in England on account of the sudden death of Sellis, a servant of the Duke of Cumberland, and the simultaneous injury received by his Royal Highness. Sir Everard Home published a declaration on this subject, which seems to indicate that Sellis committed suicide, after attempting the life of the Duke. "I visited the Duke," says Sir Everard, "upon his being wounded, and found my way from the great hall to his apartment, by the traces of blood which were left on the passages and staircase. I found him on the bed still bleeding—his shirt deluged with blood, and the coloured drapery above the pillows sprinkled with blood from a wounded artery, which puts on an appearance that cannot be mistaken by those who have seen it. This could not have happened, had not the head been laying on the pillow when it was wounded. The night ribbon, which was wadded, the cap, scalp and skull, were obliquely divided, so that the pulsations of the arteries of the brain could be distinguished. While dressing these wounds, a report came that

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 190. The case was communicated by Dr. Desgranges. Renard (p. 109,) remarks that the lungs of those who die from wounds, are seldom found gorged.

Sellis was dead. I went to his apartment—found the body laying on its side on the bed, without his coat and neckcloth—the throat cut so effectually, that he could not have survived a minute or two. The length and direction of the wound was such as left no doubt of its being given by his own hand; *any struggle would have made it irregular*. He had not even changed his position—his hands lay as they do in a person who has fainted—they had no marks of violence upon them—his coat hung upon a chair, out of the reach of blood from the bed—the sleeve, from the wrist to the shoulder, was sprinkled with *blood quite dry, evidently from a wounded artery*, and from such kind of sprinkling, the arm of the assassin of the Duke of Cumberland could not escape.”*

Arthur, Earl of Essex, was committed to the Tower on the 10th of July, 1683. This was during the reign of Charles 2d, and at the time when his brother James, Duke of York, was supposed to have great influence in the government. On the 13th, (the same day that Lord William Russel was tried and capitally condemned,) the Earl was found dead in his chamber, with his throat cut. A coroner's jury was summoned, but before they were empannelled, the Earl's body was taken out of the closet where it lay, and stript of its clothes. These were carried away and the closet washed. And when one of the jury insisted upon seeing his clothes, the coroner was sent for into another room, and upon his return, told the jury *it was my Lord's body, and not his clothes, they were to sit upon*. Before the jury, two surgeons, Sherwood and Andrews, deposed as to the wound. Sherwood stated, that the *aspera arteria* (the trachea) and the gullet, with the jugular arteries, were all divided. Andrews said, that the throat was cut from one jugular to the other, and through the windpipe and gullet into the *vertebræ* of the neck, both jugular veins being divided. The verdict of the coroner's jury was in the following words:—That with a razor, “the Earl of Essex gave himself one mortal wound, cut from one jugular to the other, and by the *aspera arteria* and the windpipe to the

* Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 6, part 2d, p. 19. Smith, p. 284. Paris, vol. 3, p. 33. London Atlas Newspaper of June 24, 1832.

vertebres of the neck, both the jugulars being thoroughly divided: and of this he died."

One Laurence Braddon shortly after, formed the opinion that the Earl of Essex had been murdered, and (as he afterwards stated,) conceived it to have been accomplished by individuals who were allowed to pass by the earl's keepers. These murderers, he supposed, were set on by the Duke of York, afterward James the II. He was tried for a misdemeanor in suborning witnesses to prove this, and was found guilty and fined £2,000. After the revolution, in 1690, he published a pamphlet entitled "*The Earl of Essex's innocence and honour vindicated*," which contains some additional particulars.

The closet was about three feet two inches wide, and there was no blood higher than the floor. The instrument itself was a French razor four and a quarter inches in its blade, and no spill or tongue at the end. Hence it must have been held by the blade, and it would seem difficult to inflict so large a wound with it. A surgeon is stated to have suggested to the coroner's jury, *that the notches in the razor were made by my lord against his neck bone*. Lord Essex was right handed, and the razor lay on the left side. Two witnesses swore that the neck of his cravat was cut in three pieces, and there were five cuts on his right hand.

Bishop Burnet is of opinion, that the earl committed suicide. He observes, that "when the body was brought home to his own house, and the wound was examined by his own surgeon, he said to me, it was impossible that the wound could be as it was, if given by any hand but his own. For except he had cast his head back and stretched up his neck all he could, *the aspera arteria must have been cut*." Both the jugulars and gullet, he adds, were cut just above the aspera arteria.

The reader will notice the discrepancy between this account and the statement given under oath by the surgeons before the coroner's jury.

This subject was also agitated for some time before a committee of the house of lords, and several physicians and sur-

geons who were examined by them, declared "that they would not positively say that it was impossible for my lord to cut his throat through each jugular vein, the aspera arteria and gullet, to the very neck bone, and even behind each jugular vein on each side of the neck, (as some judicious surgeons who had viewed the throat had reported it to be cut,) but this they would be very positive in, that they never saw any man's throat so cut which was cut by himself. And they did then further declare, that they did believe, that when any man had cut through one of his jugular veins and the gullet and windpipe, and to the very neck bone, nature would thereby be so much weakened by the great effusion of blood and animal spirit, that the *felo de se* would not have strength sufficient to cut through and behind the other jugular, as my lord's throat, by surgeons who saw it, was said to be cut."

No report was, however, made by this committee. Lord Delamere resolved to draw it up himself, but before he had completed it parliament was prorogued, and afterwards dissolved, and consequently all further proceedings were stopped.

Modern historians have generally concurred with Bishop Burnet, in deeming this a case of suicide. They dwell much on the earl being subject to fits of deep melancholy, and being accustomed to maintain the lawfulness of suicide. Such is Mr. Hume's opinion, while Mr. Hallam, (in his Constitutional History,) founds his belief on his unwillingness to think that Charles and James would have caused so detestable a murder to be committed on one towards whom they had never shown any hostility, and in whose death they could have no interest. And yet in subsequent pages of his work he informs us, that James (for Charles was never accused of any agency, direct or indirect, in the transaction,) approved of Jeffries' cruelties, and that he assisted at the tortures in Scotland.*

* The authorities from which I have drawn the above narrative, are, *The Trial of L. Braddon*, in Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 3, p. 855. *The Earl of Essex's innocence and honour vindicated*, by L. Braddon, *ibid.* vol. 3, p. 899 to 934.

No one at all acquainted with this subject, will deny its intricacy. Chaussier, in commenting on the question whether the wounds are caused by suicide or homicide, quotes two cases from Ambrose Paré. One was of an Englishman, who was robbed and wounded with a dagger, and left for dead at Vincennes. He was found in his shirt, with the trachea and œsophagus completely divided. Paré brought the trachea together, and dressed the parts so that the patient could articulate. He named his murderers, who were taken and executed, and died some three days after.

In another case, a maniac inflicted a precisely similar wound on himself in the night, besides stabbing himself in various places. He was found thus in the morning, and his servant was arrested on suspicion. He also was so far recovered as to be able to confess that he had done it himself.

Now here were two cases of wounds precisely alike; yet one was suicidal, and the other not. The collateral circumstances hence became very important; the one in a public, exposed place; the other in his bed, with his night clothes uninjured, and in a disturbed state of mind.*

I proceed now to give some cases of homicide; and the first

The Republic of Letters for August, 1735.

"Some passages sent by a person of honour to the author of the *Republic*," &c.

Burnet, vol. 2, p. 212 and 234; and Smith, p. 232 and 233.

There is also another pamphlet by Braddon, (published in 1725,) reprinted in Howell's State Trials, vol. 9, p. 1229.

Hallam's Constitutional History of England, American edition, vol. 2, p. 617; vol. 3, p. 92, 435.

Braddon in his last pamphlet says: "Queen Anne, upon her first coming to the throne, struck me out of the civil list, because, as her majesty then said, I had thrown blood in her father's face." But if innocent, why was not the parliamentary investigation completed.

* Chaussier, p. 473. Two cases of suicide from cutting the throat with a razor, are given in the *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 4, p. 403, 414. In the first, related by Marc, the individual passed from his bedroom to the window of another adjoining, and there committed the act. There was no suspicious circumstance present; the wound was from left to right; but an aged physician, called in immediately after, had, in his agitation, stepped into the blood, and thus made footsteps to and from the bed of the deceased. This, with those who afterwards came, and were ignorant of the cause, produced suspicion.

In the other instance, by Devergié, the individual inflicted no less than three wounds before he could destroy himself, and they were two inches in depth, three inches and three lines in breadth, and exactly one foot in circumference. The narrative is accompanied with a plate, and our author justly observes, that were not the circumstances known, its infliction might with great probability have been ascribed to violence.

that I shall relate, is taken from the notes of Sir John Maynard, an eminent English lawyer, and is stated by him to have occurred in the fourth year of Charles I. It happened in Hertfordshire.

Jane Norkott was found dead in her bed — her throat cut, and the knife sticking in the floor. Two females and a man slept in the adjoining room, and they deposed, that the night before, she went to bed with her child, her husband being absent, and that no person after that came into the house. The coroner's jury gave a verdict of *felo de se*. But a suspicion being excited against these individuals, the jury, whose verdict was not yet drawn up in form, desired that she might be taken up; and accordingly, *thirty days* after her death, she was taken up, and the jury charged them with the murder. They were tried at the Hertford assizes, and acquitted, but so much against evidence, that Judge Harvey let fall his opinion, that it were better an appeal were brought, than so foul a murder should escape unpunished; and accordingly, an appeal was brought by the child against *his father, grandmother, aunt, and her husband Okeman*.

The evidence adduced was, "that she lay in a composed manner in her bed; the bedclothes not at all disturbed, and her child by her in bed. Her throat was cut from ear to ear, and her neck broken. There was no blood in the bed, saving a tincture of blood on the bolster whereon her head lay, but no substance of blood at all. From the bed's head, there was a stream of blood on the floor, which ran along until it ponded in the bendings of the floor. It was a very great quantity, and there was also another stream of blood on the floor at the bed's foot, which ponded also on the floor to a very great quantity, but no continuance or communication of blood of either of these two places from one to the other, neither upon the bed — so that she bled in two several places; and it was deposed, that on turning up the mat of the bed, there were clots of congealed blood in the straw of the mat underneath. The bloody knife was found in the morning sticking in the floor, a good distance from the bed; but the point of the knife, as it stuck, was towards the bed, and the haft from the bed.

Lastly, there was the print of a thumb and four fingers of a left hand.

"*Sir Nicholas Hyde*, chief justice. How can you know the print of a right hand from that of the left, in such a case? *Witness*. My lord, it is hard to describe; but if it please the honourable judge to put his left hand upon your left hand, you cannot possibly place your right hand in the same posture; which being done, and appearing so, the defendants had time to make their defence, but gave no evidence to any purpose."

The jury brought in all guilty except Okeman, and they were executed, but made no confession.*

* Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 10, appendix No. 2, p. 29. The above, however, are not the only remarkable circumstances in this case. "Because the evidence," says Sir John Maynard, "was so strange, I took exact and particular notice, and it was as follows: An ancient and grave person, *minister to the parish where the fact was committed*, being sworn to give evidence, according to custom, deposed, 'That the body being taken up out of the grave, thirty days after the party's death, and lying on the grass; and the four defendants being present, were required each of them to touch the dead body. Okeman's wife fell upon her knees, and prayed God to show tokens of her innocency. The appellant did touch the dead body, whereupon the brow of the dead, which before was of a livid and carrion colour, (in terminis, *the verbal expression of the witness*,) began to have a dew or gentle sweat arise on it, which increased by degrees, till the sweat ran down in drops on the face; the brow turned to a lively and fresh colour; and the deceased opened one of her eyes, and shut it again. and this opening the eye was done three several times. She likewise thrust out the ring or marriage finger three times, and pulled it in again, and the finger dropped blood from it on the grass.' *Sir Nicholas Hyde*, chief justice, seeming to doubt the evidence, asked the witness, Who saw this besides you? *Witness*. I cannot swear what others saw, but, my lord, (said he,) I do believe the whole company saw it, and if it had been thought a doubt, proof would have been made of it, and many would have attested with me. Then the witness, observing some admiration in the auditors, spake further, 'My lord, I am minister of the parish, and have long known all the parties, but never had occasion of displeasure against any of them, nor had to do with them, or they with me; but as I was minister, the thing was wonderful to me: but I have no interest in the matter, but as called upon to testify the truth, and this I have done.' [This witness was a very reverend person, as I guessed, of about seventy years of age. His testimony was delivered gravely and temperately, to the great admiration of the auditory.] Whereupon, applying himself to the chief justice, he said, 'My lord, my brother here present, is minister of the next parish adjacent, and I am sure saw all done that I have affirmed.' Therefore that person was also sworn to give evidence, and did depose in every point—the sweating of the brow—the change of the colour—thrice opening the eye—the thrice motion of the finger, and drawing it in again.' Only the first witness added, that he himself dipped his finger in the blood which came from the dead body, to examine it, and he swore he believed it was blood. I conferred afterwards with Sir Edward Powell, barrister at law, and others, who all concurred in the observation; and for myself, if I were upon oath, can depose that these depositions (especially the first witness) are truly reported in substance." (Ibid. p. 29.)

In the trial of Standsfield for the murder of his father, a similar charge was brought. It is stated, that when the son was assisting in lifting the body of his father into the coffin, it bled afresh, and defiled all his hand. The opposite lawyers observe. that

Whether these were the guilty persons or not, it is certainly proved most incontestably that the female was murdered.

In several cases of late years, medical witnesses have been successful in detecting, not only murder, but also its manner, by an examination of the dead body, even when in a state of putrefaction or decay. I have already noticed some of these in a previous section, and will now refer to a few others.

A man named Beaugouin was murdered, cut in two, and his remains thrown into the Loire. The upper part was found at some distance and interred. On being taken up, fifteen days after, Dr. Ouvrad found that the cartilages between the third and fourth lumbar vertebræ had been cut. The lower portion exhibited several wounds of the abdomen. Dr. Ouvrad came to the conclusion, that either an anatomist, or a person conversant in such disarticulations, had committed the act. There was, however, no doubt of this being murder, and he therefore supposed that a butcher was the criminal. Such proved to be the fact. Within a short time, the murderer was taken and executed.*

In 1814, an individual named Augustus Dautun was murdered in Paris. His body, cut into four or five parts, was found at various places in the Seine, the head had contusions on it, and there were wounds in the chest. The various portions were carried to the Morgue, and a model in plaster was taken of the bust. Through these means the body was finally recognized. Dupuytren was the principal examiner, and his reports are well characterized by Marc as models. The most striking circumstances by which the identity of the body was ascertained, were the existence of a wart on the upper

"this is but a superstitious observation, without any ground either in law or reason. Carpzovius says he has seen a body bleed in the presence of one not guilty, and not bleed when the guilty were present." They assign, as a cause of the bleeding, that the surgeons had made an incision about the neck, and the motion of the body in removing it, caused the fresh hæmorrhage from that part. (Hargrave, vol. 4, p. 283.)

This bleeding of a dead body, the cause of which I have already explained, was noticed even by the New-England pilgrims. See Thatcher's Indian Biography, vol. 1, p. 153.

On this subject, see Metzger, p. 326; and Valentini Novellæ, App. 3. *De stillicidio sanguinis in hominis violenter occisi, cadavere conspicui, an sit sufficiens præsentis homicidæ indicium?*

* Orfila's Exhumations, vol. 2. p. 336. Several additional cases are related, where fractures were found on the dead body.

lip and an examination of the bones of the thigh, by which they proved that the individual had been lame.

The wound in the chest was found to have penetrated to the heart; it was larger within than at the surface, and indeed a second wound was discovered in the aorta, two inches higher than the other. From these circumstances, they supposed that a second blow had been given with the dagger before withdrawing it, and merely by altering its direction.

A brother, Charles Dautun, was ascertained to be the murderer. He implicated Girouard, a companion in debauchery, as an accomplice, but this was denied, and Girouard escaped apparently from the want of decisive testimony. Dautun was found guilty and executed.

On the trial, Dupuytren was asked if any marks on the dead body could indicate whether the murdered person had been attacked by one or more persons. He replied by begging the court not to give to his conjectures more weight than they deserved. All he could say was merely probabilities, but it appeared to him that a plurality of persons had been engaged in the murder, and for the following reasons. When a man is struck, his first act is to present his hands as a defence against the blow. Now in this case there was not the slightest mark of injury on them. The same person that inflicted all these wounds could not at the same time have held them. Again, the wounds on the head must have preceded those on the chest. These were mortal, the thorax containing four pounds of blood. While the hands were held, might not the head have been interposed to prevent the wounds in the chest?*

In a case of homicide by cutting the throat, the facts ad-

* *Causes Célèbres du XIX. Siècle.* vol. 1, p. 400. *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 464. Zerah Colburn, in the memoirs of his life, states that he was in Paris, and saw Dautun led to execution. He mentions the mode of his detection, which I do not find in either of the above reports. "In the teeth of the dead body, tightly compressed, was a piece of human flesh, apparently torn out in the dying struggle. After some time, Dautun was gambling at the Palais Royal, and becoming angry, threw a glass at the waiter. It was shattered into pieces, and a fragment was carried into Dautun's wrist, under the cuff of his coat. The spectators wished to examine the injury, but he obstinately refused. At last, suspecting something mysterious, they pushed up the sleeve by force, and there beheld a scar recently healed, as if made by the tearing out of flesh. The landlord had been at the Morgue and seen the plaster model. He therefore delivered him to the legal authorities as probably the murderer.

duced to prove it were, the inability to find a cutting instrument near the body, the number of cuts on and about the neck, some very deep, and some along the chin. The posterior part of the head was also wounded. And even admitting that the deceased himself could inflict all these wounds, it involved the absurdity of his being obliged to shift hands—some could alone be made by the right and the others by the left hand. From the presence of wounds of the hand, it is probable that there was some struggle.*

The remains of an individual named Ramus were, in 1832, found either in the Seine or in drains. They were collected as usual at the Morgue, and examined. It was ascertained that the body had been cut into four parts. Beyond this, however, it did not bear any marks of severe injury. A few superficial wounds only appeared on the face and eyelid. The skin and muscles were much retracted at the various sections, and particularly at the top of the thigh; the bloodvessels were completely empty; the heart was collapsed, and so light in colour that it seemed to have been washed. The lungs were empty, except of a little serosity and air.

Now, from the absence of wounds, it was evident that Ramus had not been in a condition to offer much resistance; and accordingly, on proceeding to analyze the contents of the stomach, the presence of prussic acid was unequivocally established. I shall hereafter detail the experiments. It was, therefore, a probable supposition, that while laboring under its effects, the head had been cut off. That this was done during life, seemed evident from the bloodless state of the vessels. The division of the other parts must have been made at the same time, or immediately after death.†

I will only add a case of murder by fire arms.

C. D. residing in the same house with his sister-in-law, suddenly disappeared. After a course of judicial researches, his body was found buried in a cemetery, wrapped in ten folds of linen, and with his clothes on, covered with blood. In his left side were two round holes, distant about five inches from

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 8, p. 371.

† *Ibid.* vol. 9, p. 338. *Lancet N. S.* vol. 12, p. 243.

each other. The medical examiners reported that one of these penetrated from side to side, so as to take off a part of the right breast, and on pursuing the dissection, the ball was found to have entered at the last true rib of the left side, to have passed the stomach, of which it wounded the upper part, and to have pierced the duodenum with a wound five inches long, and finally to have passed out at the first false rib of the left side. Corresponding holes were found in the clothes and shirt, and they therefore gave it as their opinion, that these wounds had been inflicted by fire arms, and were the cause of death. On this, the sister-in-law of the deceased was arrested, as the clandestine burial, together with the wrapping up of the body, led to doubts concerning her innocence.

Mr. Pelletan, and another surgeon, whose name is not mentioned, were consulted on the case. They agreed, that no doubt could exist as to the cause of the death being a wound from a fusee; but they at the same time affirmed, that the deceased might have inflicted it, either voluntarily or involuntarily on himself, and that another person could not have done it without being in an ambuscade, with his knee on the ground, and the deceased walking. From these circumstances, they were of opinion that the sister-in-law was not the murderer, if murder had been committed.

On this decision, we may remark with Foderé, that it seems difficult that a wound inflicted in this manner, and nearly in a horizontal line, could have been caused by suicide; while again, the sister-in-law, though not the actual murderer, might, notwithstanding, have been an accessory. She was, however, acquitted.*

In connexion with this subject of this section, it is sometimes of great importance to ascertain whether spots found on offensive weapons, clothing, or articles of furniture are those of BLOOD. Modern chemistry has attempted to solve the problem.

The earliest experimenter was, I believe, Lassaigne. He observed that ordinary rust could be distinguished from that produced by blood on iron or steel instruments, by dissolving

* Pelletan, vol. 1, p. 306. Foderé, vol. 3, p. 199.

the latter in distilled water. The salts and a portion of the colouring matter are taken up, while the rust is precipitated. Heat or the acids coagulates the solution, and by evaporating and calcining in a platina spoon, chloride of sodium, sub-carbonate of soda, and phosphate of lime are obtained.*

Chevallier recommended the use of muriatic and sulphuric acids, and potash, as reagents. By the two former, iron rust is altogether dissolved; but they only partially dissolve the other. The insoluble parts give all the products of animal substances. Potash dissolves both, but the liquid of the iron rust is colourless, while the other is brown.†

Orfila with his characteristic industry, also examined the subject. Among the tests proposed by him, is exposure to a heat of from 77° to 86° Fahr. If the spot on arms be of blood, it will come off in scales, but there will be no alteration if it be rust. Water dissolves the blood, but not the rust. The colouring matter may also be treated by heat and the acids, as above directed; and he adds that it is different from all other known colouring matters, since it is not changed by ammonia; chlorine also turns it green, and a large quantity decolours it altogether; but on adding infusion of galls, there is a dark red precipitate. Strong nitric acid also destroys the colour of the stain caused by blood.

When the stain is on clothing, this should be dipped in distilled water until the fluid is charged with it. The same experiments are then applicable.‡

These experiments, however desirable in their results, did not receive universal consent. Raspail, another French chemist, announced that all the indications thus obtained from true blood, might be procured from a mixture of whites of eggs and infusion of madder.§

Barruel, in his experiments on the colouring matter of the blood, found that on treating it with strong sulphuric acid, an odour peculiar to the animal from which it was obtained, was

* Anderson's Journal, vol. 2, p. 466, from *Revue Medical*.

† Journal de Chimie Medicale.

‡ North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 452. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 216. Orfila Legons, 2d edition, vol. 2, p. 564.

§ Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 3, p. 497.

distinctly perceivable. It is only necessary, he says, to put a few drops of blood into a cup, and add the acid to the amount of one-third or one-half of the other, and the odour will be evolved. This he styles the *aromatic principle* of the blood. In the male it has the odour of perspiration; in the female, the same, but much weaker. In the horse, the odour of its perspiration or of horse dung. So also with the ox, sheep, dog, and even birds. This test, then, he deemed conclusive, and applicable to all doubtful cases.*

Other chemists, however, do not appear to have the same acuteness of smell as Barruel, and we may well doubt with Wedekind, whether it would be safe to ground grave charges on a sense so variable, and where the certain detection of it is on many accounts very difficult.†

F. *Of persons found dead from noxious inhalations.*

A vast proportion of the gases, discovered by modern chemists, are irrespirable. Few of them, however, are spontaneously generated, and their noxious power must of necessity be extremely circumscribed. We shall notice such as have proved destructive to life, under the head of poisons. But there are some which may be produced under ordinary circumstances, or are occasionally the results and accompaniments of peculiar situations and occupations, and of these, the most remarkable, are carbonic acid gas and sulphuretted hydrogen gas. It must however be understood, that in many instances where they prove deleterious, other poisonous substances may co-operate in causing the result. This fact, in conjunction with the comparative frequency of injury from them, fully justifies a notice in this place.

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 267. In two cases referred to him by the magistrate, he successfully pursued this examination and pronounced one to be the blood of a sheep. See *Annales*, vol. 1, p. 543; vol. 10, p. 160.

† Numerous papers on this subject are contained in the *Annales D'Hygiène*. Vol. 2, p. 217, the objections of Raspail, with a reply by Leuret; vol. 2, p. 221, Morin's experiments on the blood of Fish; *ibid.* p. 479, Courbe, he confirms the experiments of Barruel, but objects to their application in legal medicine; vol. 11, p. 205, Baron De Wedekind, (from Henke's *Annals*,) he repeated the experiments with similar results, but remarks as stated in the text; vol. 1, 443, Chevallier; vol. 5, 467, Denis; vol. 9, 226, Lecanu, he found a great uniformity of results in experimenting on the blood of man and of fish. An extract from Raspail, pointing out his objections, may also be found in *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 25, p. 371. See also *Bulletin des Sciences Medicales*, vol. 13, p. 126; vol. 14, p. 106.

1. CARBONIC ACID GAS may be generated in various ways :
 1. When a number of persons have remained during a long time in an apartment, or any other place where the air is not renewed. They mutually vitiate the air, and produce, by the process of respiration, the poison in question. The most striking and melancholy instance of this occurred at Calcutta, in 1756. When that place surrendered to Shujah Dowla, he thrust one hundred and forty-six Englishmen into the *black hole*, at Fort William, a place only eighteen feet by fourteen, and having only two apertures through which air could be admitted. They remained here from eight in the evening, until the next morning, when only twenty were alive. A somewhat similar instance happened in London, in 1742. Twenty persons were forced into a part of St. Martin's round-house, called the *hole*, during the night, and in consequence, several died.* Individuals, in a state of suffocation from this cause, are seized with an unsupportable thirst. A copious perspiration is present, and great pain in the chest, difficult respiration, and intense fever follow. They lose their strength, and fall into a deep lethargy, to which death soon succeeds, if aid be not speedily given.† 2. The fumes of burning charcoal, consist principally of this substance and carbonic oxide. This is unfortunately a frequent cause of death. Persons on going to bed, leave pans of it burning in their apartments, and in the morning are found lifeless.‡ 3. Carbonic acid gas is contained in the exhalations from lime kilns,§

* Smith, p. 206. "A parcel of drunken constables took it into their heads to put the laws in execution against *disorderly* persons, and so took up every woman they met, till they had collected five or six-and-twenty, all of whom they thrust into St. Martin's round-house, where they kept them all night with doors and windows closed. The poorer creatures who could not stir or breathe, screamed as long as they had any breath left, begging at least for water: one poor wretch said she was worth eighteen pence and would gladly give it for a draught of water, but in vain! So well did they keep them there, that in the morning four were found stifled to death, two died soon after, and a dozen more are in a shocking way." (Horace Walpole's Letters to Sir Horace Maun, vol. 1, p. 169.) The keeper of the round-house was tried, but acquitted of wilful murder.

† Orfila's Directions, p. 170.

‡ A large number of cases of this description is quoted by Dr. Dobson, in an essay contained in Percival, vol. 1, p. 328. See also Philosophical Transactions, vol. 52, p. 454.

§ "June 19, 1813. This morning two lads were found senseless on a brick kiln in St. George's Fields. The eldest was recovered by medical assistance, but the other was lifeless. It is supposed that they had resorted to the kiln for the sake of warmth, and having fallen asleep, were suffocated by its fumes." (Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 6, part 2, p. 64.)

and cellars or places where wine, beer, or other liquors are in a state of fermentation. Hence the danger of sleeping near the former, and the necessity of ventilating the latter.

4. This gas is frequently produced in wells, marshes and mines. In the latter, however, a different substance is also generated, called the *fire-damp*, or carburetted hydrogen gas, which is no less deadly. But the frequency of fatal accidents to persons descending wells, is to be ascribed to carbonic acid.

5. In some rare instances, the effluvia of plants, which evolve carbonic acid and nitrogen during the night, have proved fatal. Dr. Paris refers to a case of this kind, where a gardener watching for the safety of a pinery, was found dead in the morning in the green-house.* 6. Lastly, I may mention, if not already enumerated, that the smoke from burning wood or anthracite coal may prove deleterious, in a great degree from the same cause.†

It seems to be now generally acknowledged, that the action of carbonic acid gas is narcotic. The experiments of Collard de Martigny are very interesting on this point. Animals are rapidly killed in an atmosphere of it, and even when diluted

* Paris and Fonblanque, vol. 2, p. 49.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 32, p. 345. Case by Mr. Watson, of the workmen at the Wanlockhead mines from the wood of a flue taking fire. Some of the symptoms are referable to the effects of sulphurous acid gas, which see under Poisons. Lancet. N. S., vol. 5, p. 154. Case by Dr. Schenck, of two persons dead from the smoke of a forge. Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 3, p. 513. Dr. John Gairdner on the deleterious effects of the smoke of coal, as illustrated in the cases of six individuals subjected to its influence. A coal fire had been kept up during the night, and the smoke produced by it had passed down another chimney into the bed-room, the door of which was, however, open. They awoke with dizziness—a reluctance to rise—stupefaction of mind and a desire to return to sleep. When thoroughly roused, headache succeeded, with vomiting or sickness at the stomach. They gradually recovered by the next day. Christison, p. 692. Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 13, p. 442: A recent case by Devergie of one individual dead and several dangerously ill from the gas issuing from a smouldering beam that was heated by the flues of a kitchen chimney. The individuals attacked were in an upper room; on removing the boards and giving access to the air, the beam took fire.

The common council of New-York, not long since, were seriously affected by the gas proceeding from burning anthracite.

I will add to these the following curious case. On the 12th of May, 1650, some forgesmen at Leipsic were drinking in a chamber, where a child, twelve years old, was asleep. They amused themselves with passing a half extinguished candle under its nose. The child awoke, but again fell asleep, and they continued this course for half an hour. It was shortly after seized with convulsions, or epileptic fits, and died in three days. The parents complained of this to the magistrates, who consulted the Faculty of Medicine. They answered that the fumes of a candle were identical with the vapours from charcoal and lime, and would produce the same deleterious effects. (Valentini's Pandects, vol. 1, p. 195.)

with common air, they died in two or three minutes. Yet when a lighted candle was afterwards introduced under the bell glass used for the experiments, it burnt lively. This circumstance will explain why accidents have sometimes happened to persons descending into wells, after ascertaining that combustion could be supported.

In an experiment on himself, the body was enclosed in an atmosphere of this gas, with due precautions for the maintenance of breathing, and the symptoms were those usually observed from breathing it. Animals treated in this way died after some time.*

Sir Humphrey Davy attempted to breathe the pure gas, but found it impossible; the glottis was closed from the irritation produced. D'Arcet, visiting the place at Montpensier, in France, where carbonic acid gas issues from the ground, as at the Grotto del Cano in Italy, attempted to ascertain its effects, but they were so sudden, that having moved towards it on his hands, he instantly fell flat and would have expired, had he not been drawn back by his guide.†

The earlier symptoms, so far as they can be ascertained, are a sense of weight; uneasiness or pain in the head; ringing in the ears; giddiness; a great disposition to sleep; a rapid loss of strength, so as to be unable to continue upright; great difficulty of breathing. The senses no longer exercise their functions, and there is a partial or total loss of sensibility.

In advanced stages, the breathing is occasionally stertorous, and froth issues from the mouth. Coma is perfectly established, interrupted briefly, in some instances, by delirium, and in others by slight convulsions. But the last are generally wanting.

If they are discovered, after the gas has had its full operation, their bodies present the following appearances: the head, face and neck are swollen; the eyes are propelled from their sockets, but preserve their brilliancy often for two or three hours after death; the tongue is protruded, swollen, and inclined to one side of the mouth; the jaws are firmly closed;

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 215. His experiments are also given in full in American Medical Recorder, vol. 13, p. 296.

† Journal Royal Institution, vol. 2, p. 201.

the face is livid; the lips are of a dark blue colour; the abdomen is inflated; the body preserves its warmth for a length of time, and sometimes indeed is warmer than natural, while the limbs remain flexible for some hours.*

These appearances are not, however, invariable. The countenance is sometimes pale, and generally bears few marks of suffering. In the cases of Dr. Schenck, already quoted, there was an extreme tranquillity of features, and the face was pale—no great flexibility of the limbs, and no unusual tendency to putrefaction.

On dissection, the blood vessels, and particularly those of the head and lungs, are found filled with blood, and it is principally accumulated in the right side of the heart, and in the veins leading to it. The blood itself is black, and so fluid, that it is discharged readily from the smallest incision. Effusions of serum, tinged with blood, are found, particularly in the ventricles of the brain, and in the bronchiæ, while the muscles are so soft as to be torn by the slightest exertion. The epiglottis is said to be raised, and in some instances, sooty matter has been found in the nostrils and trachea.†

As a variation from the ordinary appearances, it may be mentioned, that Renard, in three cases, found the right side of the heart empty.

* Struve, p. 52. Belloc, p. 184.

Dr. King in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 7, p. 180. History of three cases. Here the fingers and toes were curved, and the nostrils dilated.

Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, Art. *Asphyxia*, by Dr. Roget.

London Medical Repository, vol. 27, p. 468.

London Medical Gazette, vol. 15, p. 601. This is a remarkable case of suicide in Paris. The external appearances correspond exactly with those given above; but it is probable, from the signs of sickness of the stomach, and the presence of urinary and fecal discharges, that there must have been some suffering.

† Portal, in *Medical Commentaries*, vol. 3, p. 254. Belloc, p. 184. Dr. Babington's case of exposure to the vapour of burning charcoal, in *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 1, p. 93. Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 347. Larrey, vol. 2, p. 123.

Dr. Bright's *Dissections in Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 20, p. 4, of two sailors suffocated on board of a vessel. I presume these are the same mentioned in the *Lancet N. S.*, vol. 1, p. 553, as occurring at Guy's Hospital. The vessels of the dura mater were filled with blood, and the sinuses gorged with it in a fluid state. The heart and its vessels were in a similar state, and the mucous lining of the bronchiæ beautifully injected. — Christison, p. 712. He refers to a case by Mertzdorff, where, in addition to the usual appearances, there was a general diffusion of blood between the arachnoid and pia mater. Alfred S. Taylor, *Lecturer on Medical Jurisprudence*, London, on the phenomena of suffocation from carbonic acid, copied in the *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 1, p. 219.

Although the causes which produce death in these cases are often evident, yet dissection should never be omitted in any suspected case. It may aid us materially. The loss of irritability in the muscles is also strikingly greater from this cause of death, than is ever seen in cases from drowning, hanging, &c. and it is therefore worthy of particular attention.* We should notice whether any marks of injuries are present, which may excite doubt. The place, the circumstances under which the body is found, the noxious material that has been inhaled, all deserve investigation, and may lead to the truth.

2. SULPHURETTED HYDROGEN GAS. This is the principal noxious substance exhaled from privies and common sewers, and it has proved destructive to many.

Chaussier appears to have been among the first to notice its rapidly fatal effects, whether inhaled or injected into the cellular tissue or rectum. According to the experiments of Thenard and Dupuytren, the gas, even when mixed with a large quantity of atmospheric air, is a very powerful poison. A proportion of 1-300th was sufficient to kill a bird in very little time. 1-800th produced death in a dog, and a horse was killed in an atmosphere containing 1-250th part of it. Nysten and Broughton have verified these results, either by a repetition of the experiments, or by injecting it into the veins.†

"When the exposure has lasted but a short time, the sufferer experiences a general uneasiness, accompanied with nausea and sickness; his respiration becomes irregular, but not difficult, and his pulse much agitated; the skin is cold, general convulsions, almost tetanic, take place, and the muscles of

* Orfila remarks, that if the body of a person suffocated by a non-respirable gas, or by strangulation, be cold or stiff, we may be certain that more than twelve hours have elapsed since death.

† Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 3, app. p. 29, Exp's of Dupuytren. Christison, p. 693, 698. Brande's Journal, N. S., vol. 7, p. 16.

Sulphuretted hydrogen does not appear to be deleterious to man in an equal ratio. It has been found by accurate observation, that the workmen employed in the common sewers of Paris work without inconvenience in an atmosphere containing one part of sulphuretted hydrogen in 100 of atmospheric air, and that they constantly breathed from 25 to 90 thousandths of this gas. Air found on analysis to contain 3 per cent of sulphuretted hydrogen, had been breathed for several minutes by the person collecting it. (*Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 2, p. 144.)

the chest and face are particularly affected." The abdomen is often tumid, and recovery is preceded by vomiting up a bloody froth. Severe colic pains also are common.

"In cases where an individual has been long exposed to the action of this gas, all power of motion and sensation is lost; a frothy saliva, tinged with blood, flows from the mouth; the lips and face are livid, the eyes are shut, and void of all brilliancy; the pupil fixed and dilated; the pulse is small and frequent, and the respiration short and difficult, and apparently convulsive; the action of the heart becomes disordered and violent, and the extremities are in a state of relaxation. To this succeeds an agitation more or less excessive, the muscles are attacked by alternate spasms and convulsions, and the body is curved backwards, while the individual appears to suffer from acute pain."*

Delirium occasionally occurs, and in one instance mentioned by Dupuytren, the eyes were open and red. This, however has been ascribed to the presence of hydrosulphuret of ammonia, which is frequently found with sulphuretted hydrogen in sewers.†

In one case where death followed, and dissection was performed forty hours after death, the head and trunk were already putrid, the skin bluish, and elevated by gas. The blood contained in the various cavities was black and fluid. The brain was greenish and tender. The bronchiæ were of a red colour, and the posterior part of the lungs were gorged with black blood, but that organ was generally crepitous. The stomach presented traces of recent irritation, and the intestinal canal was greenish. The liver, of a greenish black colour, was in a state of congestion. All the viscera exhaled the smell of putrid fish, and several of the persons present at the dissection, were subsequently affected with lassitude and

* These quotations are from Orfila's Directions, p. 167. They are derived from Halle's Recherches, Paris, 1785. See also a case by Dr. Howard. Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 2, p. 401.

† In the Dictionnaire des Sciences Medicales, vol. 43, p. 305, Art. *Plomb des Fosses*, the occurrence of ophthalmia and coryza is expressly ascribed to the hydrosulphuret.

stupor, sleeplessness and violent colic.* Experiments on animals have presented similar results.†

G. *Of persons found hung.*

I need hardly apprise the medical reader, that there is an intimate resemblance between the principal physiological phenomena, observed in persons *hung, strangled and smothered*. I shall, therefore, in this section, consider these in detail, and hereafter confine myself to what may be deemed peculiar to the other kinds of death.

We understand by the term *hanging*, the suspension of a person by a cord or some other ligature around the neck. The rapidity of death from it, evidently depends much on the manner in which the cord is adjusted, the texture and strength of the intervertebral ligaments, the fullness of the bloodvessels, and the strength of their coats. All these circumstances, with that of the weight of the body, and the height and suddenness of the fall, will render a shorter or longer space of time necessary to destroy life.‡

The manner in which death occurs in these cases, is far from being perfectly understood. Sufficient, however, is known to authorize us in asserting, that there is considerable variety.

The first to be mentioned, is apoplexy, produced by pressure on the large bloodvessels that go to the head. Though this has been occasionally doubted, yet we have proof sufficient, both in the external appearances, and on dissection, to

* New-England Journal, vol. 3, p. 279. Account of three cases extracted from the *Nouveau Journal de Medicine*, for April, 1818.

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 374.

‡ Dr. Plott in his history of Staffordshire, quotes a patent roll of the 48th year of Henry the 3d, in which it is stated that Inetta Balsham having been convicted of harbouring thieves, was sentenced to be hung, and accordingly was hung, but remained alive from nine until the next morning. A free pardon was therefore granted her. Dr. Plott suggests, that her life was probably preserved, on account of the larynx being turned to bone, "as it happened in the case of a Swiss, as I was told by the Rev. Obadiah Walker, master of University College, who was attempted to be hanged no less than thirteen times, yet lived, notwithstanding, by the benefit of his wind pipe, that after his death, was found to have turned to a bone." (*Professional Anecdotes*, London, 1825, vol. 3, p. 180.)

"Governor Wall was long in dying, in consequence of which, a particular examination of his throat took place, and it was found to have been owing to an ossified portion of the trachea, resisting a portion of the rope." (Dr. A. T. Thomson's *Lectures*, London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 418.)

warrant us in saying, that this does happen. The compression prevents the return of the blood by the veins, and although it cannot obstruct the circulation by the intervertebrals, yet its effect naturally is, to cause an extreme congestion of the vascular system of the head, and of the brain particularly. It would not seem, however, in cases of recovery, to be attended with an ordinary consequence, viz. paralysis. Foderé has collected some curious cases in illustration of this. Thus, Wepfer saw both a man and woman who survived hanging. The latter recollected nothing, and the former stated, that on the application of the cord, he felt no pain, but sunk, as it were, into a profound sleep. Morgagni, also, mentions that an individual who had recovered under similar circumstances, informed him, that the first sensation was flashes of light before his eyes, and that he then sunk into the same sleep. Our author also quotes a case on the authority of Lord Chancellor Bacon. A gentleman took a fancy to ascertain whether those who were hung, experienced any pain, and actually performed the experiment on himself. He immediately lost all consciousness, and the event would have been tragic, had not a friend entered in time to cut him down.*

In fatal cases, as we shall presently show, the brain exhibits all the ordinary appearances of apoplexy.

Another immediate cause of death, and about which, there is hardly any dispute, is suffocation, or exclusion of air from the lungs. The following experiment by Dr. Munro, senr. of Edinburgh, strikingly illustrates the correctness of this opinion. "A dog was suspended by the neck with a cord, an opening having been previously made in the trachea below the place where the cord was applied, so that air could pass into the lungs as freely as in ordinary respiration. After hanging in this state for three quarters of an hour, during which time the circulation and breathing went on as usual, he was taken down and appeared not to have suffered materially from the operation. The cord was then shifted from above to below

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 134. He, however, mentions that there were individuals living at Marseilles, who, during the French Revolution, were hung and their lives saved in the night time, and who for a long time were affected with a ringing of the ears and deafness.

the opening made into the trachea, so as totally to prevent the ingress of air into the lungs, and the animal being again suspended, was in a few minutes completely dead.”*

In connexion with this, or possibly with both these causes of death, the injury produced by compression of the nerves of the neck, must not be overlooked. That it aids in producing the fatal termination can hardly be doubted, after recurring to the experiment of Mr. Brodie. He “passed a ligature under the trachea of a guinea pig, and tied it tight on the back of the neck with a knot; the animal was uneasy, but nevertheless breathed and moved about. At the end of fifteen minutes, the ligature was removed; on the following morning, however, it was found dead.”†

After considering apoplexy and suffocation as two of the immediate causes of death, it is the opinion of some of the latest writers on the subject, that in many instances, they unite in producing the fatal termination.‡

To these, a third is to be added, consisting, in addition to the compression, in a laceration of the trachea or larynx, or a luxation or fracture of the cervical vertebræ, from a rupture of the ligaments of the neck. The celebrated Louis, inquired of several executioners, how they saved the lives of some criminals, while others were irrecoverably dead? It was answered, that in the latter case, they caused a laceration of the trachea and a luxation of the first cervical vertebræ from the second, by placing the knot of the cord under the neck, and then giving a rotary motion to the body at the moment when the ladder was taken from under its feet.§ This luxation chiefly occurs in heavy persons, or where they may have fallen from a height upon the end of the rope, or where attempts have been made to hasten death by increasing the

* From Curry, quoted by Dr. Roget. Art. Asphyxia in *Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine*.

† Paris, vol. 2, p. 44.

‡ I refer particularly to two very valuable dissertations in the *Annales D'Hygiène*, and both translated from *Heuke's Zeitschrift*. One by Prof. Remer of Breslau, entitled materials for a medico-legal examination of death by strangulation, vol. 4, p. 166, and the other by Dr. Fleischmann of Erlangen, on the various kinds of death in strangulation, vol. 8, p. 412. I shall have frequent occasion to refer to these.

§ Foderé, vol. 3, p. 141 Dorsey's Surgery, vol. 1, p. 207.

weight of the body. And the rapidity of the result is well illustrated by accidents where the vertebræ are injured.

The above statement evidently explains the great diversity in the phenomena, observed of late years, on the bodies of those who die from hanging. This subject, indeed, has attracted peculiar attention, and all variations from received accounts have been carefully noticed.

I will commence by mentioning such as have been most generally deemed signs of strangulation. The mark of the cord is evident around the neck, forming a livid, depressed circle; the face, chest, shoulders, and occasionally the arms and hands, are swollen and livid; the countenance is distorted; the eyes open, red, or protruded; the tongue is sometimes wounded by the convulsive motions of the jaws, and thrust out of the mouth; the fingers are bent, and the hands nearly closed. De Haen, from his observations, added, that a bloody mucus often issues from the mouth and nose.* In some instances, an ecchymosis is distinctly seen on the shoulders, and extending upon the breast.

Of late years, there have been added to the external signs, the semi-erect condition of the penis, and the emission of semen. The fæces and urine are also sometimes expelled at the moment of death. It is further stated, that in females executed, a bloody discharge from the uterine organs has been noticed.

How variable all or most of these are, remains to be stated; and unless we can explain this diversity in connexion with the various causes of death, the subject must remain extremely intricate.

The mark of the cord around the neck, has generally been deemed a common occurrence in death by strangulation, and hence its presence was greatly relied upon. It was known indeed, and is so stated by De Haen and Foderé, to have been sometimes wanting. This, however, was thought to be a very rare occurrence; was not much discussed; and was explained when noticed, from the suddenness of death in these instances. The following case, that occurred to Esquirol, succeeded in at-

* De Haen, vol. 4, p. 338.

tracting marked attention to its presence or absence. An insane female at the Saipétriére, was seen to hang herself on a tree in the garden. An attendant immediately hastened to her, and cut down the body; but all attempts to restore life proved fruitless. The features were composed and natural; the skin not discoloured or ecchymosed. There was a double mark on the neck, as the rope had been twisted twice round it; but there was only a simple depression, without any change of colour. In three hours after, there was no change; in seven hours, the mark of the rope had a light brown tinge, but without any ecchymosis. None indeed occurred; and on dissection, the cellular tissue beneath was found dry and compressed, so as to form a *brilliant white band a line and a half in breadth*.*

Since the publication of this case, the absence of ecchymosis has been noticed by other observers. Dr. Klein, a German, in fifteen cases of suicide by hanging, could find none on the neck.†

Dr. Remer, however, was enabled to examine no less than 102 medico-legal reports of persons dead by hanging, and all occurring in Silesia. Of these, 89 presented a distinct and well marked ecchymosis; in one, the skin was shrunk, and resembled parchment; in two others, the skin was excoriated; in one, putrefaction had advanced too far to permit an examination; and in nine, it is expressly stated that the bruised condition was wanting. He also adds, that the ecchymosis was not confined to those who were suspended from some height, but equally occurred in such whose knees or feet were in contact with the ground.

After recognizing these facts, he next inquires whether a satisfactory explanation can be given, why this mark is present on the neck in some cases and not in others? It has been suggested that its absence may be owing to the comparative softness of the article used for hanging. But even a handkerchief and a cravat cannot in the ordinary sense be

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 487.

† Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 4, p. 168. Orfila's Leçons, 2nd edition, vol. , p. 363, &c. mentions many other cases. See also a very recent case of suicide, communicated by Dr. Albin Gras. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 13, p. 208.)

deemed such, since they are twisted and folded, so as to become hard, or at least take that character, by the pressure of the body. In four cases where handkerchiefs were used, there was ecchymosis; in two others there was none.

We come then with a greater probability of a solution, to the respective causes of death. Persons may die so soon from apoplexy that no time is left for the cord to act on the living neck, for it must be kept in mind, that *ecchymosis only happens when a sufficient interval has elapsed previous to death for the cord to produce its effect.** In connexion with the consideration of this mode of death, and to explain more fully its occasional extreme suddenness, Dr. Remer conjectures that the pressure on the nerves, in conjunction with the congestion, may produce a state identical with a *palsy of the brain*. Out of thirteen cases, in which the absence of ecchymosis is particularly noticed, Dr. Remer found that in one the examination was so imperfect as not to permit any deduction; one exhibited on dissection, the marks of death by suffocation, and the remaining eleven, those of apoplexy, either simple or complicated, with suffocation.†

The deductions drawn by him from this investigation, are the following: 1. The presence of ecchymosis on the neck is to be deemed a proof of death by hanging. 2. As it occasionally is wanting, its absence cannot be considered a positive proof of the contrary supposition: but 3. When it is thus wanting, death has probably been suddenly caused by apoplexy.

But in connexion with this we must also observe, that the ecchymosed part, or in other words, the position of the cord,

* It is due to the editors of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, to state that they indicated some years since, the important distinction now developed by the investigations of Remer. In proof of this, I offer the following extract. After stating that the period during which the rope has been left around the neck, is insufficient of itself to explain the presence or absence of ecchymosis, they remark: "We believe the true cause may be shown to be rather the *more or less complete exclusion of air*. When the exclusion is complete and sudden, the body will present no unusual appearances, but when it is incomplete and gradual, so that the person lives for some time in a state of agony, the signs of venous turgescence are every where remarkable." (Vol. 19, p. 621.)

† Dr. Fleischmann is altogether opposed to the idea of a cerebral palsy, and prefers ascribing death in part to compression on the large nerves, which induces paralysis of the lungs and heart.

is not uniformly the same in every individual. Out of 47, in whom the diversity was reported, it was found in 37 between the larynx and the chin; in 7 on the larynx, (one of these indeed had this organ torn,) and in 2, below it.* Dr. Fleischmann, apparently without being acquainted with the investigations of Dr. Remer, notices a similar diversity, and he endeavours to explain the various kinds of death in connexion with it. When the cord, he observes, is so placed around the neck, as to compress, in preference, its large vessels, and particularly the venous ones, and at the same time prevent the passage of the blood below the constriction, apoplexy will follow. When, on the contrary, the cord is placed between the larynx and os hyoides, pressure operates powerfully on the respiratory passages, without so strikingly affecting the blood vessels. Here death ensues from suffocation. The mixed state, or death from a combination of suffocation and apoplexy, probably ensues when the cord is placed below the larynx. Its direction must necessarily then be horizontal, and it will interrupt the passage of the air as well as compress the blood vessels.†

I am far far from presenting these views of Drs. Remer and Fleischmann as perfectly sound or well established. They require confirmation, but they also deserve every attention, as being among the most valuable approaches to a clear understanding of the subject.‡

In every case, whether ecchymosis be present or absent, there should be a dissection of the neck. Supposing it to be found, let it not be confounded with the lividity observed on the dead. By noticing the extent and the place of the extravasation, (in front as well as on the declining part,) all mistake may be avoided.

* Remer.

† Deslandes has suggested the possible case of the cord slipping upwards at the moment of suspension, till it is stopped by the upper jaw, and thus closing completely the orifice of the larynx. Here life would be instantaneously extinct, and almost without a struggle. (Orfila *Léçons*, 2d edition, vol. 2, p. 359.)

‡ Out of six cases related by Dr. Fleischmann, ecchymosis around the neck was present in two. In the remaining four it was absent, but the mark of the cord was of a yellow colour, hard and rough, resembling, I presume, parchment, as in the instances already cited. In one instance, noticed by Amusat, there was a circular depression, three lines in breadth, indicating the pressure of the cord, and the skin of this was dried, thin, and as if burned.

The next most important external sign is the *condition of the genital organs*. That the urine, fæces, and occasionally the semen, are expelled at the moment of strangulation, appears to have been known for some time. It is mentioned by Drs. Gordon Smith and Male. Other observers have subsequently noticed it. M. Guyon, surgeon major at Martinique, was present at the execution of several negroes. Being habited in white dresses, any circumstance of this description could more readily be seen, and he observed erection of the penis in several at the moment of strangulation, and immediately thereafter, several urinated freely. One hour after the execution, he found the penis in a state of semi-erection, and its canal filled with semen.* Of Dr. Remer's cases, twenty-two were females, and eighty males. Of the latter, forty-five were not examined. In twenty, nothing was found, and in fifteen there was either an ejaculation of semen or a sanguineous congestion of the genitals. Other cases will be quoted below.†

On the other hand, Dr. Klein did not observe it in his fifteen cases. It is therefore evident, that although its presence is a presumptive proof that death has been caused by strangulation, yet its absence must not infer the contrary; besides, it has occurred from other modes of violent death. Although Dr. Klein did not observe it in any of his cases of death by hanging, yet in a suicide who mortally wounded himself by blowing out his brains, after surviving twenty-four hours, the penis was found in a state of erection. In another case, at Breslaw, where a fire-arm had torn the descending aorta and its accompanying vessels, there were decisive proofs of the emission of semen.‡

Nor does this phenomenon seem to be confined to the male sex. In a female who suspended herself with a handkerchief, besides a marked ecchymosis of the neck, the genital organs

* Anderson's Journal, vol. 1, p. 151.

† Emission of semen and erection were found in Amusat's case; vesiculæ seminales empty. (North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 205.) By Orfila, in a suicide aged 62 years. (Léçons, 2nd edition, vol. 2, p. 376.) In one case of Fleischmann, (Annales, vol. 8, p. 420.) In Irons, executed at London in 1828. (Lancet N. S., vol. 2, p. 124.)

‡ Remer, Annales, vol. 4, p. 175.

were seen red, the labia swollen, and the mouth of the uterus a little open.* Dr. Otto seems also to have noticed some bloody discharges, but the particulars of this case I have not been able to obtain.† Mr. Charles Cooke mentions two cases of executed females, in whom he was informed there were present bloody discharges; and he himself noticed them in three insane women, who hung themselves. In one of these, urine and fæces were also evacuated; and it is an interesting circumstance, that two of them had passed the usual period of child-bearing.‡

As to the remaining external signs, I must content myself with a brief commentary.

The condition of the tongue, its protrusion, its swollen state and its wounding by the teeth, must evidently vary with the position of the cord. It is therefore not to be always found. Dr. Gordon Smith indeed remarks, that it is only produced when the rope presses upon the cricoid cartilage. Should it press above the thyroid gland, the tongue will be pushed back, owing to the compression of os hyoides.§ Something may also be ascribed to the manner of death, whether easy or convulsed. In the latter its unnatural position is most common.

It is evident that the extent of the ecchymosis on the parts adjacent to the neck, must depend somewhat on the height from which the body is projected; and accordingly we more commonly find these extensive on such as have been executed. Dr. Houston of Dublin, in four cases of this description, found “the cervical vertebræ uninjured, and also the spinal marrow and the brain; yet in both, the sterno-mastoid muscle on the right side (the opposite to that on which the knot of the rope was applied) was ecchymosed, contused and broken; that of the left was only slightly bruised. The os hyoides and thyroid cartilage were completely severed from each other. The other hyoid muscles were so bruised and lacerated, that only

* Remer, *Annales*, vol. 4, p. 177.

† *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 25, p. 213.

‡ *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 8, p. 751. See also, on this subject, *ibid.* vol. 8, p. 308; vol. 9, p. 49, 98, 161, 661.

§ Smith, p. 217; Belloc, p. 170.

some stretched shreds of them remained to hold the parts together. The thyro-hyoid membrane was also torn across; and the epiglottis, pulled from its root at the back of the thyroid cartilage, had passed up with the os hyoides and tongue into the back of the mouth. The skin alone remained unbroken, and interposed between the rope and the cavity of the pharynx. This was the only region of the neck which gave evidence of much injury; the great vessels and nerves all escaped unhurt.*

The variety in the *colour of the countenance* must have some connexion with the immediate mode of death. Whenever there is an imperfect interruption of respiration, so that the struggle is prolonged, we find the cheeks, lips and eyes particularly swollen. The admission of even a small portion of air into the lungs permits the heart to continue its gradually impeded circulation, while at the same time the pressure of the rope obstructs the return of blood and accumulates it in the face.†

Its paleness is however no positive proof that death has not occurred from hanging. We find in many cases of apoplexy, an absence of similar congestion.‡

The presence of bloody mucus, or froth issuing from the mouth or nose, is not by any means constant. In some instances, as in that of the Duke of Bourbon, it is seen, while in many executed, it is wanting.§

* Quoted by Dr. Beatty. There is a similar case in *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 2, p. 121.

† Roget: Art. *Asphyxia*, in *Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine*, Dr. Fleischmann supposes that the livid colour of the face only occurs when apoplexy operates slowly. Sometimes one side is more livid than the other, and Dr. Kellie ascribes this to the position of the cord. The executioner generally adjusts it on one side of the neck, and by the weight of the body, it slips upwards on that side towards the mastoid process behind the ear, and there is consequently a space corresponding to the rising of the noose, which is not embraced by the cord, and where the veins are subjected to little pressure. Here of course there will be less lividity.

‡ Dr. Dunbar of Virginia, in stating some galvanic experiments on an executed criminal, mentions that the neck was found dislocated, the first and second vertebræ being separated so far from each other as to admit the end of the little finger. The face however was natural. (*Baltimore Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 1, p. 245.)

§ I copy the following from a newspaper, and cannot therefore vouch for its authenticity. It however teaches a useful lesson. A man in one of the eastern states was convicted of murdering his wife by strangulation: A physician deposed that in all such cases the tongue protruded, and there was foaming at the mouth; on this a respite was given, until another medical man present at a recent execution, testified that neither of these had occurred in the latter instance.

As to the appearances on dissection, they must of course vary with the cause of death, and they will be more or less distinct according as it is least complicated.

In those dead from apoplexy, the brain will be gorged with blood, its vessels distended, and sometimes there will be extravasation, while the right as well as left ventricle of the heart will contain blood.

When an individual expires from suffocation, cerebral congestion will be wanting, but the lungs will be engorged, and filled with air. The left side of the heart will be empty, while the right and its vessels contain more or less of fluid blood.

Of the cases examined by Remer, nine appeared to have died from apoplexy, six from suffocation, nineteen were too imperfectly dissected to permit a classification, and the remaining sixty-eight appeared to have sunk from the mixed effects of both, as already explained. In some, the marks of both are completely developed, while in others, one seems to predominate. Thus we find the blood accumulated in the brain, and occasionally even extravasated, while the lungs also are gorged, and the right ventricle filled and the left empty. Here impeded respiration has interrupted the return of blood to the heart, and its congestion on the brain continues until the last pulsation, and it is this last pulsation which empties the left side of the heart.

Again, there may be an incomplete apoplexy, or in other words, only a certain degree of congestion, with complete suffocation. Dr. Remer, however, noticed but one of this description. Of the next variety he mentions thirteen cases, and this is complete apoplexy with incomplete suffocation. The lungs contain air and blood, but the head dies first, and its effects extend downwards. Here the death is so rapid that the blood continues fluid.*

* As the appearances noticed in the text may appear somewhat arbitrary in their division and their peculiarities, I have subjoined such cases as I have been enabled to collect, for the purpose of comparison. In Guyon's, (already referred to,) the blood-vessels of the head contained but little more than usual; those of the lungs were gorged, the right auricle also empty; the cervical vertebræ uninjured. In Mary Caen, executed at London in 1826, the rope had caught between the thyroid and cricoid cartilages and separated them; death occurred instantly; appearances natural; no con-

Besides the appearances described in the preceding pages, there are some others occasionally observed, which deserve a brief notice.

In the case of Dr. Amusat, already referred to, and which was suicide by suspension, at the point corresponding to the stricture around the neck, the middle and internal coats of the caratid were found ruptured, precisely as when a ligature has been applied to it. Devergié supposing, and correctly, that this, if constant, would be a valuable proof of suspension during life, made several dissections to ascertain whether it was always present; but out of thirteen he only noticed it in one. It was accompanied with a bloody infiltration into the cellular coat of the artery, but without ecchymosis in any of the adjacent parts. The cord consisted of two packthreads knotted together, and the neck was compressed circularly.

Dr. Devergié requested Dr. Lenoir of the Salpêtrière, to suspend dead bodies with the finest possible materials, and he accordingly did so in twelve cases,—but, although they were in several cases hung, as soon as possible after death and the legs pulled with some force, no lesion of the arteries could be discovered.*

In a case of suicidal suspension, along with the usual cerebral congestions, Dr. Prus found the upper and middle lobes of the right lung affected with vesicular emphysema; and at

gestion in the external veins of the head, and those of the dura mater but slightly distended; some effusion in the ventricles, and the blood altogether fluid. (Lancet, vol. 9, p. 688.) In Amusat's case, suicide by suspension, and where the most remarkable circumstance noticed, was that the epiglottis was thrown back, and as it were turned on itself; congestion is not mentioned, but a serous effusion; the bronchiæ were gorged; the lungs also, and the right auricle contained only a small quantity of fluid blood mixed with air. (North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 205.) In Esther Hubner, executed at London in 1829, there was congestion of the vessels of the dura mater, and bloody serum oozing from some of the torn vessels of the bone itself; the longitudinal sinus was almost empty, but the other sinuses were full; the veins of the plexus choroides were full, but the arteries empty; the substance of the brain exhibited numerous bloody spots; considerable effusion between the arachnoid and pia mater, and in the ventricles. (Dr. Bright, Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 20, p. 3.) A case of suicidal suspension at the Salpêtrière, in December, 1834: the individual, a female, hung an hour and a half; the face pale; the furrow which was in front of the os hyoides, was yellowish like parchment; *the skin strongly adhering to the sub-cutaneous tissue*, but no ecchymosis; the substance of the cerebrum injected, and the brain firm; very little blood in the lungs, and more of it in the left cavities of the heart than in the right. (By Dr. Gras, Boston Medical Magazine, vol. 3, p. 617, from London Medical Gazette.)

* Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 2, p. 196.

one part, the air had escaped from some ruptured cells under the pulmonary tissue, and formed three bladders of air, each nearly an inch across.*

Flaccidity of these organs has, on the other hand, also been observed. In two cases of Dr. Fleischmann, this was seen very strikingly; and I observe it also noticed by Dr. Rhineland, in his account of the dissection of Le Blanc, executed in New-Jersey, in 1833. The face was livid; the mark of the rope was below the cartilages of the larynx, and very deep; the superficial veins were greatly distended with dark fluid blood, while the carotids and internal jugulars were empty; the lungs were in a state of collapse, and the right auricle and ventricle were empty.

Dr. Fleischmann explains this occasional collapse by supposing that death occurs at the moment of making a powerful expiration.†

The same variety that occurred between the condition of the internal and external vessels of the head in Dr. Rhineland's case was much insisted upon by the late Dr. Kellie, of Leith. In his elaborate paper on congestions of the brain,‡ he even doubts whether the apoplectic state occurs in these cases, and mentions three examinations of persons executed, where the veins external to the cranium were fully distended, while but little change was seen internally.

He mentions also, that Dr. Monro has repeatedly observed a peculiar softness in the brain of persons executed.

In every suspected case, two questions may present themselves for solution by the medical witness.

1. *Was the individual suspended before or after death*, or in other words, has he been previously killed in some other way, and then placed in this situation to avoid suspicion?

The materials for a proper answer to this, are to be drawn

* Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 22, p. 516. In all cases of persons hung, it is important to remember that the engorgement, if present, will be greatest at the depending part, at their base and diaphragmatic face, according to Renard. This, however, should be noticed very early, since if the blood continue fluid, a very short continuance of the body in the horizontal posture will induce the usual appearance.

† Dr. John Davy states, that in his experiments on animals, strangled by a ligature on the trachea, but a very small quantity of air was found in the lungs. (Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 3, p. 444.)

‡ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 131.

from a careful examination of the facts stated in this section. It is useless to conceal that the marks are far from uniform, that great diversity exists between them, originating unquestionably from (which has been too much over-looked,) the various ways in which death may be caused. We find, however, that in a majority of cases certain signs are quite constant, and if one or more of these be absent, we should ascertain, if possible, whether this is not owing to some peculiarity as already laid down.

An ecchymosis along the mark of the cord is allowed, even by those who question its frequency, to be a very decided proof of suspension during life; but if it be absent, unless collateral circumstances aid us in our investigation, the difficulty of solution will be increased. I make this remark, because Orfila unequivocally states, that in twelve experiments on the dead body, some immediately after death, others after six, eight or eighteen hours, the depression made by the cord, and the skin under it as well as the subcutaneous cellular tissue, presented precisely the same appearances as they do from suspension before death.*

We cannot, however, do wrong in particularly examining the form and situation of the mark around the neck, and pursuing its dissection carefully. If it is at the bottom of the neck, unless the position of the body favour this, there is a probability of strangulation, since, if suspended, the cord would slip to the upper part of the neck. It may happen that a person has been strangled and then suspended. In this case, we should expect to find two distinct circles on the neck, each characterized by its peculiarities.

The congestion of the venous system, the excited state of the seminal organs, and the livid condition of the countenance, &c., all are favourable to the idea of the presence of life, but we must not forget that other modes of violent death

* *Leçons*, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 381. Marc, however, doubts whether this state can be exactly produced on the dead body. (*Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 5, p. 173.)

Orfila is so positive on this subject, that he considers the presence of ecchymosis very uncommon, and imagines that the brown colour of the furrow has often been mistaken for it.

may produce them. Let the probability of these last be satisfactorily disproved, and the proof gains weight.*

The presence or absence of luxation, or fracture of the vertebræ, is not to be greatly relied upon, as it may have been produced by force subsequently applied, such as pulling at the feet. The inference, if any, is however in favour of its being caused during life, if accompanied with the usual marks of lesion.†

Wounds, effused blood, and marks of violence, are to be judged of according to the rules already laid down.

One or two cases will serve to illustrate the present point.

A female aged 50, at Mantes, (in 1683) was found suspended from a beam in a barn. The face was not discoloured, no froth issued from the mouth or nose, the tongue was natural, there was no change of colour around the shoulders, nor was the neck marked by the cord. It was determined to examine the body minutely, and a short investigation discovered a small wound, directly under the right breast, which, on being pursued, was found to have penetrated through the heart, and produced an effusion of blood in the thorax. It was evident that she had been thus murdered.‡

In 1811, a female in France aged sixty, large and fat, was found suspended by a handkerchief from a tree in the garden. The height of the branch from which she hung was eight feet seven inches, and its distance from the trunk three feet six inches. The tree did not give off branches until at six feet from the ground.

Near the tree was a common ladder seven feet long, and on applying it for the purpose of mounting, it was found impracticable to reach the point of suspension. The bark was slightly rubbed above, but below was untouched and covered

* An opportunity is also offered in cases that may hereafter occur, of verifying the opinions of the German writers that I have quoted. If the signs, both external and internal, correspond with the apparent cause of death, and the position of the cord, the inference must be strong in favour of the presence of life.

† Orfila Leçons, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 338. It is proper to state that this author doubts whether, in the present state of our knowledge, we can go *beyond probability* in answering this question of suspension before or after death. If so, moral circumstances deserve a more careful investigation than ever.

‡ Devaux, quoted by Foderé, vol. 3, p. 153.

with moss. The heels of the body were two feet six inches from the ground.

The head bent a little forward and the hands were half closed. The face was pale, and not tumified. The eyelids natural and partly open, the eyes sunken and dull, the lips dry and not swollen, the jaws closed and the tongue approaching them. There was no froth in the mouth or nose.

On the neck where the handkerchief had been, there was a semicircular depression of a little more than an inch in breadth, extending upwards. The colour of this was a light violet. On the lower part of the neck near the left clavicle, was a slight excoriation. The other external parts were natural.

On dissection a tumour was found in the occipital region, and when this was cut into, a fracture of the bone was seen, two inches long, accompanied with extravasation of blood. The lungs were soft, slightly engorged on their posterior part, and the right cavities of the heart were filled with fluid black blood.

The neck presented no ecchymosis or engorgement in the tissue under the parts where the handkerchief had been placed. The tissue under the excoriation just below, was however ecchymosed.

The medical testimony in this case was, that death had not resulted from suicide, nor indeed from hanging; but that the injuries stated preceded the suspension.*

2. The second question is, *whether the individual has hung himself, or has been hung by others?*

The presumption in all cases of suspension, is favorable to the idea of suicide, since hanging is a difficult mode of perpetrating murder, unless the strength of the parties be greatly disproportionate, or the assailants be numerous and powerful. And accordingly we find that in a vast majority of cases, it is an act of suicide. It must however be understood, that there are instances in which a decision is very difficult, as the marks left either from homicide or suicide may be precisely similar.

We should first ascertain whether suspension took place

* Chaussier, Recueil, p. 376.

before or after death; and next, the immediate cause of death as before stated. The instrument of death, that is, the cord, should be compared with the furrow that it has made, so as to ascertain whether the diameter of the neck be much diminished by it. All the circumstances which indicate strangulation, are so far against the idea of suicide.*

The presence of luxation or fracture of the vertebræ is an indication of homicide, and for the reason that we most frequently meet with them in persons executed, and then, as I have already stated, often in consequence of some additional force applied by the hangman.† But it may also happen as suggested by Belloc, when a suicide precipitates himself from some height, or even when the body is heavy and has descended with some force against the cord. These are, however, exceptions, and their existence may be ascertained by proper examination. A case of this description occurred to Dr. Ansiaux of Leige, in the person of a female who hung herself from a beam in the barn. She had mounted by a chair. On dissection the intervertebral ligaments between the first and second vertebræ were found ruptured.‡

Wounds and marks of violence on the body, are generally to be deemed proofs of homicide. But there may be suicides who injure themselves previous to suspension. De Haen records a case, of a person, who, while hanging, inflicted several wounds on his face. These, however, we should not consider as the cause of death. A still more remarkable case is mentioned by Ballard, of a young ecclesiastic, who cut his

* Foderé observes, that in suicide that portion of the cord which surrounds the neck, is relatively longer than in homicide, where the constriction will be more violent. The skin will also in this case be more drawn up towards the chin. (Vol. 3, p. 159.) Mahon remarks, that in assassination, the neck is sometimes so compressed, that the diameter of the circle described by the cord, is not more than two or two and a half inches. He saw a female who had been hung, in whom the integuments alone resisted the cord; the vertebræ, muscles and larynx were separated, and the diameter of the circle was about two inches. (Vol. 3, p. 49.) It is, however, doubted, and I think justly, by Male, (p. 235,) whether this should be considered a conclusive proof of homicide. Much of the tightness of the noose must depend on its situation.

† Also by leaping on the shoulders, as is practised at the Cape of Good Hope, or pulling the legs. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 397.)

‡ Belloc, p. 173. Orfila, *Lecçons*, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 381. Remer is strongly in favor of luxation being considered a proof of murder. Orfila is at best doubtful, and rather disinclined to rely much on it.

throat partially, and then hung himself in the vestments of his office, which he had arranged for this purpose.* Dr. Male has also suggested that wounds may possibly be accidental, as when a person by swinging himself with violence, breaks the rope and wounds himself by falling upon some article of furniture. The following case occurred to him: "An apprentice boy in my neighbourhood, working alone in an attic, tied one end of a rope loosely round his neck, whilst his master was from home, probably without any intention of destroying himself, and twisted the other round the projecting part of the top of the door, the planks of which were irregular and somewhat divided; a small stool, on which he stood, slipped from under him, when he fell forwards, striking his temple against the corner of a box, which cut him to the bone. He lay along the floor, his head and shoulders only elevated a few inches above it. The cord not being tied had nearly run its whole length, and then caught within the planks of the door, in which state he died. The wound was magnified by popular rumour into many, and vengeance was denounced against the innocent master, who was accused of having first killed, and then suspended the boy. On examination, the mark of the cord was found to extend from ear to ear, the vessels of the brain were turgid, the thyroid cartilage broken, the nails blue and the hands firmly closed. From this and other important circumstantial evidence, the coroner's jury were convinced that the charge was unfounded."†

The situation of surrounding objects, the state of the dress, the place and posture of the body, the appearance of the hands and nails, whether they bear any mark of resistance, all deserve attention.

George Hebner, a tailor, was found hanging to the top of a bedstead, in the garret of a house of ill fame, in Dean-street, London, kept by a widow Hughes. His hands were tied behind his back, and his handkerchief drawn over his face. The rope around his neck was fastened by what is termed a sailor's knot. These circumstances indicated homicide, and

* Ballard, p. 409.

† Male, p. 182.

they led to the detection of a sailor, Ludman, who, with Mrs. Hughes, was found guilty and executed.*

The state of mind of the deceased, his previous history and situation in life, all may aid us in forming an opinion, and particularly so, if a predisposition to insanity is found to exist. We should not rely much on the cast of countenance. Although every thing on it indicative of fright or horror, is so far in favour of violence, yet we must remember that the suicide at the moment of the mortal pang, may experience similar feelings.

A curious case of an attempt at homicide by hanging, occurred in 1827, in the Scottish Courts. Marion Brown, a woman aged 69, twisted a small rope three times round the neck of her husband, older than herself, while he was asleep, and fastened it to a beam in the room in such a manner, that when the neighbours entered, he was found lying on the floor with the head raised about a foot from it. He was quite insensible, his face livid, and it was some minutes before he could be roused. He deposed that *he was not aware of any thing that passed during the attempt to hang him.* The prisoner was proved to have been intoxicated, and was only sentenced to imprisonment.†

“If the person be not elevated from the ground or floor at all, while the cord is not so tight about the neck as to strangle in this posture, and no other cause of death can be discovered, there can hardly be a possibility of doubt as to self-murder. A few years ago, a man aged 75, destroyed himself at Castle Cary, by fixing a cord round his neck while sitting on the bed-side—leaning forward till his purpose was accomplished. His wife, who had for years been bed-ridden, and therefore not likely to have been fast asleep, was in the room during the transaction, and knew nothing of what was going on.‡

Among the multiplicity of cases that have come before legal tribunals, I will only select four for consideration.

A young man, eighteen years of age, and named *Bartholomew Pourpre*, was found dead and hanging to a tree, at seven

* Paris, vol. 3, p. 44.

† Syme's Justiciary Reports, p. 152.

‡ Smith, p. 278. For similar cases, see page 123.

o'clock in the evening of the 12th of August, 1736. A surgeon, who examined the body, certified that he had been strangled. His father had married a second wife, who was on very ill terms with the young man, and had produced frequent quarrels and threats of murder between them. Suspicion was, therefore, excited, but its probability was destroyed by the idea, that a father would not murder his son, and also from the circumstance that he was fifty-two years old, and his son eighteen, and in full health and vigour. On this reasoning, the father was acquitted, and the son was deemed to have hung himself.

An order having, however, been made to prepare a statement of the suicide, and the cause being carried up to the parliament of Aix, the attorney-general discovered such facts in the statement of the surgeon, as led him to believe that Pourpre had not destroyed himself. It was mentioned not only by him, but by other witnesses, that the mark of the cord, instead of being at the upper part of the neck, was at its lower part, just above the shoulders; and secondly, that the teeth were knocked in and bloody. On dissecting the integuments, no alteration or ecchymosis was found on the upper part of the neck, but under the skin just above the clavicles, there was a circular and deep seated ecchymosis, the muscles were livid, and the trachea was red, with some rupture of its fibrous fascia. The parliament, from these facts, decided that the father had strangled him, and had put his foot on the mouth of his son, either to prevent his cries, or to hurry on the strangulation. The suspension, they declared, was subsequent to his death. Whether the father was guilty or not, we must at least say with Foderé, that two facts are well established in this case: 1. That the son had been strangled before being hung; and 2. That the strangling had been done, not by himself, but by others.*

Marc Antoine Calas, was the son of John Calas, a merchant of Toulouse, aged seventy years, of great probity, and a protestant. This son was twenty-eight years of age, of a robust habit, but melancholy turn of mind. He was a student of law,

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 152, cited from Louis. Chaussier, p. 439.

and becoming irritated at the difficulties he experienced, (in consequence of not being a catholic,) concerning his license, he resolved to hang himself. This he executed by fastening the cord to a billet of wood placed on the folding doors which led from his father's shop to his store-room. Two hours after, he was found lifeless. The parents unfortunately removed the cord from the body, and never exhibited it to shew in what manner his death was accomplished. No examination was made—the people, stimulated by religious prejudice, carried the body to the town-house, where it was the next day examined by two medical men, who, without viewing the cord, or the place where the death had been consummated, declared that he had been strangled. On the strength of this, the father was condemned by the parliament of Toulouse, in 1761, to be broken on the wheel. He expired with protestations to heaven of his innocence.

Reflection, however, returned when it was too late. It was recollected that the son had been of a melancholy turn of mind—that no noise had been heard in the house while the deed was doing—that his clothes were not in the least ruffled—that a single mark only was found from the cord, and which indicated suspension by suicide—and in addition to these, that the dress proper for the dead, was found laying on the counter. Voltaire espoused the cause of the injured family, and attracted the eyes of all Europe to this judicial murder. The cause was carried up to the council of state, who on the 19th of May, 1765, reversed the decree of parliament, and vindicated the memory of John Calas.*

The Duke of Bourbon, (otherwise called the Prince of Condé,) the father of the unfortunate Duke D'Enghien, was residing at the Chateau de St. Leu, in the seventy-fifth year of his age. On the evening of the 26th of August, 1830, although much depressed with the result of the "Events of the Three Days," he entertained a party and went to bed at midnight, leaving directions that he should be called at 8 A. M. The key of the door of his apartment was, according to cus-

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 167, from the *Causes Célèbres*. See also Grimm's *Historical and Literary Memoirs*, (from 1753 to 1769,) vol. 2, p. 41, 117 and 166.

tom, in the hands of *Sieur Le Comte*, who locked it, but the Duke himself closed the inner bolts. At the appointed time, the signal was made, but no answer being returned, it led to alarm, and finally to breaking open the door. On entering the room and opening the shutters, the Duke was found dead, hanging from a curtain rod attached to the top of the window. A chair was displaced on opening the shutters. The height of the rod from the floor was six and a half feet, and attached to it were two white linen pocket handkerchiefs tied together. The noose formed by them, suspended him. The tongue projected out of the mouth; the visage was pale; froth issued from the mouth and nose; the arms hung by his side, and were stiff; the fingers closed; the toes of his feet touched the floor, the left heel being elevated three inches, and the right, one and a half; the knees were half bent. His night dress appeared natural and undisturbed, and the bed was as if a person had lain in it.

On further examination, no ecchymosis was seen around the neck, but a distinct depression, most marked on the left side, where the knot of the handkerchief had been situated; blood also flowed from the urethra.

These were the facts elicited in the inquests made by the physicians first summoned, and all within a few hours after death.

The circumstances, however, of this case, and the high rank of the individual, rendered a more extensive inquiry necessary; and accordingly a commission, consisting of *Drs. Marc, Marjolin and Pasquier*, was appointed, and they acted on the 28th. The additional facts reported by them, I will now state:

The face continued pale, and the back and the depending parts of the body were livid, as is usual in corpses; the depression made by the handkerchief is between the *os hyoides* and the upper third of the thyroid cartilage, passing upwards and backwards, and terminating at the mastoid process. The skin under it is dry, hard like parchment, and of a yellow colour. There was a very slight excoriation, three lines in diameter, just below the furrow; also a slight ecchymosis about

an inch below the posterior part of the elbow, and one or two excoriations on the front of the legs. All these last are ascribed to contact with the chair and wainscoting, while in the act of stepping off.

On dissection, no ecchymosis was found in the parts under the furrow, but they were hardened and thickened; the external jugulars contained but little blood, the internal ones very full of fluid black blood; the carotid had a little serous blood; there was no contusion or lesion on the external integuments of the head; the dura mater adhered and its vessels were engorged; there was some serum in the ventricles, and the substance of the brain was soft. All the other parts of the head were healthy. The cartilages of the larynx were sound; the tongue swollen and livid; the mucous membrane of the bronchiæ injected and red, and a bloody froth in all their divisions; the lungs crepitant, dark coloured and filled with blood, while both sides of the heart were equally empty; semi-erectations and an emission of semen.

Dr. Marc, from whose account I have taken the above facts, proceeds to consider the case under the two questions which I have previously noticed.

That the *hanging occurred during life*, is, in his opinion, established by the absence of any other lesion that will account for death; by the condition of the tongue—of the genital organs—of the bloodvessels; by the fluidity of the blood—the state of the bronchiæ, and the lungs and heart. Even the appearance of the furrow is no evidence against it, since that is known to be present in many instances.

But, secondly, *was this a case of suicide or homicide?* From the state of parties, this became a debated question; and indeed some physicians, as Dubois and Gendrin, gave it as their opinion, that the duke might have been murdered. The position of the body touching the floor with its toes; the ecchymosis just *below* the mark of the cord; the assertion, that from a previous injury to his right hand, his fingers were injured, while from a fracture of the collar bone, the left arm was so weakened that he could not raise it above his head; the state of his mind on the evening of his death; all were urged in favor of the probability of violence. The exco-

riations on the arms and legs might be equally the act of the murderer dragging the body to the place of suspension.

To these presumptions, Marc replies, that if murdered, the mark of the noose would have been more parallel with the lower jaw. It is hardly possible that assassins would have given it that direction on which they could apply least force. They would also select a cord or a rope in preference to a cravat or handkerchief, as producing the desired object much sooner. Beside, the mark did *not extend around the whole neck*. All these are difficulties, even supposing the prince was asleep, when strangled; but if awake, there must have been more striking marks of resistance. That on the neck was evidently caused by the cord, and on the other parts, by striking against the chair or window. They were oblong in form, and in each case on the front side. As to the state of the shoulder from fracture of the collar bone, Dr. Marc remarks, that nothing was discovered to warrant this assertion. On the contrary, it was notorious the duke was an accomplished sportsman.

That the position of the body is not inconsistent with the idea of voluntary suspension, is incontestably proved by several cases, either seen by himself, or derived from other observers. In one, a man was found suspended to a cross rope going between two beams, by means of a cotton handkerchief. This was in a barn; the feet were supported in a heap of grain, and the knees bent forward so much that they were but a few inches from the grain. In another, a prisoner was found hanging to the bar of a window, so low that he was nearly setting on the ground, and he had previously tied his hands together. In a third case, a prisoner hung himself in his cell, which was arched, and so low, that in the highest part, a man could not stand erect: yet he hung himself from the grating of the roof, and was found almost setting down, with his legs stretched out before, and his hips within a foot and a half of the ground: in the fourth, a girl of the town suspended herself from the supporter of the little shelf in the cell. It was so low, that she was obliged to stretch her legs and rest, with one on her heel, and the other on her toes, in

order to accomplish her purpose. Again, a female was found stretched at the foot of her bed, the body laying on the floor, and the head and shoulders supported by the cord attached to one of the posts of the bedstead.*

In these cases, the probability is that pressure on the blood-vessels produces very early a loss of sensation and nervous power, and the individual is deprived of ability to prevent, even if he were then desirous, the fatal catastrophe.

As to the moral circumstances attending this case, Dr. Marc dwells much on the apprehension excited in the duke by some remarks made at the evening party, concerning the state of feeling in Paris against the exiled family. The fragments of a written paper were also collected in the hearth, in which he spoke of suicide. There is, however, a great contrariety of statement as to the deportment and state of mind of the deceased.

A third opinion has gained ground, and certainly seems to me not at all improbable, and that is, that the death by suspension was owing to accident. The Duke was a veteran libertine; even at his advanced age, he had his mistress (the Baroness de Feucher) living in the palace with him. It is a known practice with persons of this description, to cause themselves to be half hanged in order to arouse their dormant generative powers, and several have lost their lives from not being taken down in time.† Is it not possible that this might have been the cause of death?‡

Sarah M. Cornell, an operative (as the term now is) in one of the cotton mills at Fall River, Rhode-Island, left her home on the evening of the 20th of December, 1832, in good health

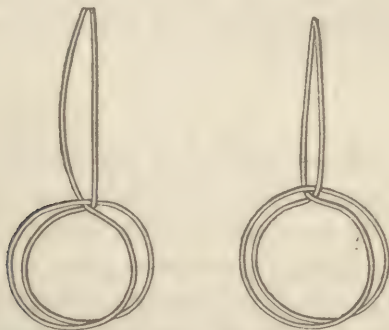
* Besides these, which are only a portion of Marc's cases, others may be found in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 11, p. 472. A boy in Connecticut, some years since, by way of curiosity, hung himself in a similar way.

† Fatal cases are mentioned in the *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 9, p. 609; and *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 9, p. 49.

‡ The authorities consulted in this case, are: *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 5, p. 156. Medico-legal examination of the cause of the death of the Prince of Conde, by Marc.—*London Med. Gazette*, vol. 9, p. 485, 608.—*Albion newspaper* of February 11, 1832. I have followed the narrative of Marc in this case, principally because it is the only one that I have been enabled to examine. The facts in favour of the idea of murder, are, however, well enumerated in the article last referred to, in the *New-York Albion newspaper*.

and spirits; and on the morning of the 21st, was found dead, suspended to a stake. Her cloak was hooked together nearly its whole length, only one hook being loosened about the centre of the chest. Her calash was on her head, and her hands gloved. Her shoes not on her feet, but stood about eighteen inches from the body, and there was a little mud on one of them. Her toes touched the ground, the heels being nearly perpendicular. The knees approached nearly to the ground, and the clothes were smoothed back as far as they would reach under her legs. The cord, which consisted of hemp, small in size, and taken twice round the neck, was attached to the stake about six inches from its top. Its length, from its fastening on the stake, to the neck of the deceased, was short of six inches. Her calash was so far back on the right cheek, that the face rested against the stake, and in consequence was distinctly marked by the pressure.

The cord was described by a witness who had followed the seas, as a *clove hitch*; two loops, one passing under, and the other over.



And he also added, that it must be drawn at both ends horizontally in order to tighten it. The knot was at the right side.

The countenance was pale; and on dividing the cord, the strings of the calash were found under it. A deep horizontal indentation was found to extend exactly around the neck; and this was so marked, that the neck below it measured eleven and a half inches, while at the mark, its circumference was only ten and a half. It passed round the neck above the thyroid cartilage, an inch and a quarter below the tip of the ears on both sides. When the head was erect, the mark was higher

at the back of the neck than it was in front. The tongue protruded slightly. Several females, who prepared the body on the same day that it was found, for burial, deposed that there were marks as of the print of fingers passing upwards on the abdomen; that there were bruises on the legs, but the worst one was on the back of the hip. There were scratches on the knees, with some dirt. One knee had the appearance of being stained with grass, and one witness (a female) indeed swears that she picked grass from it. The vagina was bloody, so that her linen was stained; the fæces evacuated and flattened. The right arm was raised upwards, quite stiff, under the cloak.

A coroner's jury was summoned. A physician who appeared before them, inclined to the idea of suicide, particularly as he was aware of her pregnancy from previous consultation with him, and also by noticing the fulness of the abdomen. A verdict of suicide was accordingly brought in, and she was interred on the 22d, the same day on which her body had been found.

Suspitions, however, arising, the body was taken up again on the 24th, and a further examination made by medical men. The indentation on the neck looked like parchment; the stomach was healthy; the lungs gorged with black blood; the abdomen was livid and discoloured, but they do not speak of the marks of fingers. They observed, however, the scratches and bruises on the knees and legs, and the discoloration of the former as if by grass; the contusion above the hip was also noticed. At the same time the uterus was examined, and a fœtus found; the os tinæ was open and dark, but the rest of the uterus was healthy; the membranes were not ruptured.*

A subsequent examination of the body was made on the 26th of January, but the facts elicited were of but little importance, as it is impossible, from the evidence, to discriminate between those which may be deemed the result of advancing putrefaction, or of injury during life.

Such are, I believe, all the important circumstances that

* The facts relative to the fœtus and its probable age, I have noticed in a previous chapter. See vol. 1, p. 241.

make up the medical testimony in this case. It remains to consider it in reference to the questions already proposed.

Was the female suspended while living? In answer to this, I would premise the remark that death was evidently caused by strangulation, using that word now in its most extensive sense. The absence of any other injury sufficient to account for it, the mark of the cord, the condition of the lungs, the fæcal discharges, and the condition of the vagina, if we determine to explain that without the idea of an attempt at abortion, all unite to render this opinion probable, and indeed certain. But in agreeing to this, we have only approached to the difficult part of the subject. The horizontal mark extending all around the neck—the deep indentation it had made, combined with the position of the body, and the peculiar character of the cord, all render it doubtful whether hanging was the immediate agent. Add to this, the marks of injury on various parts of the body, which, at all events, are not incompatible with the idea of previous violence. Professor Channing, whose able replies, during an examination of at least three hours, cannot be too much commended, in answer to the question, replied that he thought the mark might be horizontal, “if the body were nearly on the ground, and suspended from above. In such a case, the body falling forward, the mark of the cord on the back of the neck, or the side nearest the place from which the cord was suspended, would not be apparent at all. I knew (says he,) an instance of suicide of this kind; there was very little oblique pressure in that case; the mark was directly across the windpipe, and but little appearance elsewhere.”

In further support of the idea of hanging during life, the absence of *two* marks around the neck, the calmness of the countenance, the inability to discover any indications of struggling in the stack-yard, and the impossibility to strangle a person with a cord so near the ear, were urged.*

On the other hand, the state of the clothes, the shortness of the cord, just long enough to go round the neck and fasten

* On this trial, Dr. Channing testified that he had seen some fourteen cases of people hung, and in most of these, the countenance was pale. Dr. Dunn, of Newport, confirmed this from the observation of four cases.

to the stake, the probability that the pressure of the body on it would have altered the mark from its horizontal position, to one tending upwards, were dwelt upon to establish the idea of murder. And in connexion with this, the idea has been advanced, that the marks of violence, and particularly those on the female organs, being indicative of a struggle, she may have been in a fainting fit, when strangled and suspended.

The character of this female was decidedly bad. She had indulged in habits of incontinence for years, and was now pregnant. So far her helpless and (if her charge as to the paternity was false,) desperate condition, is favourable to the idea of suicide. Seduction, however, and murder too often follow each other.*

I commenced the examination of this trial with strong prejudices against the accused—prejudices, however, founded on a perusal of the testimony as published in our newspapers. After a careful and deliberate review of all the facts, with reference to the present work, I will only say, in the language of Professor Walter Channing, (in a communication with which he was kind enough to favour me,) that “every point is surrounded with difficulty.”

It is not by any means certain, from the *medical* testimony, and that alone I desire to consider, that Miss Cornell was murdered.

H. *Of persons found strangled.*

I have already, in the previous section, indicated the difference between this species of murder and hanging, and indeed were it not for the sake of regularity, they might be considered together.

The following distinctions are, however, to be noticed.

In strangulation, strictly considered, the distinction consists in the murdered not being suspended. It is a more common and probably a more violent mode of murder than hanging,

* I have examined the following pamphlets in stating this case: Report of the trial of E. K. Avery, for the murder of S. M. C., by Benjamin F. Hallet, Boston, 1833. A Report of the same, published by Marshall & Brown, Providence. Strictures on the case of E. K. Avery, by Aristides. Vindication of the result of the trial of E. K. Avery. A manuscript communication from Dr. Graves of Baltimore, has aided me, and also an Analysis of the case in Boston Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 8, p. 334.

and we should therefore expect that the mark of the cord, ligature, or whatever may be used, would be more distinct.

The diversity that occurs in the external appearance is to be explained in a similar manner as those seen from hanging. The instrument of murder varies considerably, from a cord to the application of the hands. The simplest form is probably the bow-string, as practised by the Turks. Here the ligature is applied round the neck and drawn so tight as to interrupt at once the alternate entrance and exit of air by the wind-pipe.* But in ordinary cases, death is not so rapidly produced. There is more or less of struggling; and I apprehend that in by far the greater number of cases, suffusion and distortion of the face will be seen—depending, however, on the length of the conflict.

The mark of the ligature will generally form a *horizontal* discoloured circle round the neck and towards the lower part. The dislocation of the vertebræ is not to be expected, though there may be fractures of their processes, and in all probability, injury to the cartilages of the larynx.†

The appearances on dissection will not vary materially from those stated in the previous section, except that in cases of manual strangulation, they will not be so distinct, since the imperfect closure of the wind-pipe has allowed respiration and circulation to go on for a longer time.‡

The same questions are to be considered here as in the former section. *Was the deceased actually strangled, or was the rope fastened around his neck after he was dead?* There are instances on record, where injuries have been inflicted on bodies strangled, to avert suspicion of the true manner in which they were killed.

I commence with one, which, even at the distance of a century and a half is still a vexed case. It acquired an importance from its connexion with the distracted state of England on religious subjects, in the reign of Charles II., and the supposed murder was attributed to the agency of the Catholics. I discard this idea altogether. The Popish Plot was engendered in fraud, and no credence can with justice be given to

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 396.

‡ Smith, p. 224.

† Beatty ut antea, p. 333.

any of its perjured inventors. I will state the case simply as it comes down to us, from the narrative of eye witnesses and the testimony of responsible observers.

Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, an eminent magistrate in London, was, on the 12th of October, 1677, found dead in a ditch, nearly a mile out of town. His sword was thrust through him, but there was no blood on his clothes or about him. His shoes were clean. His money in his pocket. His neck, which was open, without any thing on it, had a mark all round, an inch broad. It was also dislocated. The breast was marked with bruises.

This is the statement of Bishop Burnet, who went to see the body.

Subsequently, several individuals were tried in the court of King's Bench, for publishing letters importing that *Sir E. Godfrey had murdered himself*. Though a case of libel, they endeavoured to defend themselves by calling witnesses to prove the truth of the fact, and this the chief justice (Pemberton) allowed to the fullest extent. The medical testimony is as follows.

Two wounds were found on the body, within an inch and a half of one another. One went no farther than the bone, having struck on a rib, and the other through his back. When the sword was drawn out, blood followed. The neck was very flexible. The face was bloated, and the eyes bloodshot. The upper part of the breast was much discoloured. And Mr. Lazinby, a surgeon, deposed to the marks on the neck as being very distinct, with a swelling above and below them.

It is urged in opposition to these striking facts, that Sir E. Godfrey was of a melancholy temperament, and laboured under a great depression of spirits; that he probably destroyed himself under the operation of this feeling, and that the mark around the neck might be owing to the tightness of the collar.*

* Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 2, p. 759 to 791; vol. 3, p. 505 to 518. Burnet, vol. 2, p. 42. Smith, p. 225. Hallam's Constitutional History of England, American edition, vol. 2, p. 574. Edinburgh Review, vol. 53, p. 39. Compare with these Lingard's History of England. The reviewer in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 191, observes that the proof of strangling in this case is quite inconclusive, and animadverts with perfect justice on my introduction of the testi-

Philip Standsfield was tried and found guilty, in 1688, of the murder of his father, Sir James Standsfield, of New Milns, in Scotland. This atrocious parricide appears to have been a man of vicious and debauched habits, and on extremely ill terms with his parent. He cursed him, and repeatedly swore that he would take his life. The father was murdered by strangulation in his bed chamber, at the dead of night, and the body was afterwards taken, and carried to some water hard by. In the morning it was discovered lying on the top of the water, which was only five feet deep, and not a running stream, and although Philip was desired to delay the funeral, yet he caused it to be immediately interred. Suspicions were, however, excited, concerning the cause of death, and two surgeons were sent for from Edinburgh, by order of Sir John Dalrymple, the King's advocate, to examine the body. They (James Murehead and James Craufurd,) had it dug up, and on inspection, found the following appearances, which I shall give in their own words. "Having, with all possible exactness, viewed the corpse, we observed the face a little swelled, and inclining to a dark reddish colour, some fullness of some capillarie veins in the pallat of the mouth towards the uvula, as also a large and conspicuous swelling, about three inches broad, of a dark red or blue colour, from one side of the larynx round backwards to the other side thereof; we observed the jugular veins on both sides the neck very large and distended, and full of blood; there was a large swelling under and betwixt the chin and cartilago scutiformis; there was also a little scratch below the left mandibula, which had rankled the cuticula, and made some little impression on the cutis. Having made incisions from the chin down about the larynx, and cross upon the swelling of the neck, we found a greater laxness and distance, (as we think) than ordinary, betwixt the cartilago scutiformis and os hyoides; we found the tumour on the neck containing bruises, like dark or blackish blood; the jugular, when cut, bled considerably, especially that on the left side.

mony of Oates's gang. In the present narrative, I have omitted this altogether, but I am still inclined to consider the case as one of strangling. See *Baltimore Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 1, p. 34.

“Having opened his breast, we found the lungs distended to the filling up of their capacities, but free of water; his stomach, liver, &c. were all in good condition; we found no water within the corpse; the corpse had no smell at all; the breast, belly, privy parts, &c. were all well coloured; there was no swelling in his belly, nor any thing but ordinary to be seen on his head.”

This report was submitted to the deaconry of surgeons at Edinburgh, and they state, “*that though it is not usual to declare more than matter of fact,*” yet they, in obedience to his lordship’s commands and inquiry, whether these symptoms import drowning or strangling, reply, that they indicate external violence, and such as could not be caused by drowning simply. On that part of the report, which details the appearances found on opening the breast and stomach, they observe, that *a body, when drowned, is generally found to have much water in it.* As this was not present in the deceased, as the lungs were distended, but free from water, and as the other circumstances mentioned in the report, indicated violence, they decided that there were just grounds to think that he was not drowned.

The college of physicians were also consulted, and answered that there was sufficient reason to believe that Sir James had been strangled, and not drowned.

Spurway, a person present at the dissection, proved that when surgeon Murehead was moving the cap from the head, the eyes opened, and the eyelids were much swollen, and very red.

The defence set up was, that Sir James had drowned himself, and in reply to the argument that no water was found in the body, it was urged, that when a man commits suicide in this way, he will keep his breath, and thus prevent the ingress of the water. Various conjectures were also advanced in the pleadings to account for the swelling of the neck, but did not prove satisfactory, and the parricide was with great justice condemned and executed.*

I shall adduce another case, to show the facility with which

* Hargrave’s State Trials, vol. 4, p. 283.

a person may be murdered in this manner. Dr. Clench, a physician in London, was called out of bed by two persons, on the night of the 4th of January, 1692, who desired him to visit a friend who was not well. He entered a hackney coach with them, and drove about several streets in the city for an hour and a quarter. The two individuals then left the coach, and sent the driver on an errand. When the coachman returned, he found Dr. Clench sitting on the bottom of the coach, against the front seat, with his head against the cushion. Thinking him in liquor, he shook him, but obtained no answer. He then called the watch, and they found him strangled by a handkerchief in which a coal had been placed, and then the coal applied directly over the windpipe.* The coachman had heard no noise while driving the carriage.†

It must, however, not be forgotten that strangulation is sometimes effected by other means, than a cord, ligature or handkerchief. It may be performed by the hand, and in this instance, instead of a circle round the neck, the discolouration will be partial, the bruises will be of an indistinct form, or the positive marks of fingers may be traced.‡

In 1763, a man named Beddingfield, was murdered in England, and the charge was laid against his wife and man servant. The medical testimony was very unsatisfactory, as no dissection had taken place, but it was proved, that there were marks about the neck resembling those of fingers. A contradictory account was, however, given of the number; one surgeon said a thumb and *three fingers*, the other, a thumb and *four fingers*, while another evidence, who also saw the marks at the inquest, spoke of *two* only, "which looked as if the blood was set in the skin."

* "There are a caste of robbers in Upper India, who strangle their victims by means of a cummerbund, (a long piece of cloth worn round the waist,) in which a knot is cast, and thus, from the softness of the cloth, leaves little or no mark; they generally throw the body into a tank or well, and putridity in that country advances so rapidly, that in 24, or at most 48 hours after death, nothing can be found by which the cause of death could be traced." DUNLOP.

† Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 4, p. 495.

‡ These marks are occasionally very slight. A young officer was strangled in his bed by a soldier. The surgeon of the regiment could only find one small spot, which the murderer afterwards confessed he had produced by violent pressure with his thumb. Metzger, p. 379.

The defence was, that the deceased had fallen out of bed, in a fit of apoplexy, and was found lying on the floor on his face, with one hand round his neck.

I am far from thinking that this could have been mistaken, if a proper examination had been made. The discrepancies in the testimony, and the omission of dissection, might, however, have led to subsequent doubts, had not one of the condemned persons confessed that he had strangled Beddingfield, by seizing his throat with his left hand, while asleep, and that though the deceased struggled violently and made some noise, yet he soon accomplished his purpose.*

Sir John Dinely Goodere, in 1741, was forced by violence on board the Ruby ship of war, commanded by his brother, Capt. Goodere, and lying in the port of Bristol. In the night he was strangled by two assassins in the employ of his brother. One of them confessed, that the other fell on Sir John, as he lay in bed, took hold of his throat with his hand, (his stock being on,) and so strangled him with his stock. They then put a rope with a noose in it, round his neck and drew it tight, to insure the certainty of the murder. In accordance with this, Mr. Dudgeon, the surgeon's mate, of the Ruby, swore, that there were some marks on his neck, which looked like the scratching of nails, while blood came out of his nose and mouth.†

"On opening the bodies of those who are murdered by manual strangulation, the usual appearances of this kind of death may not seem so conclusive as in other cases, from the person making continued resistance, and the functions of respiration and circulation going on in some measure for a longer period than when they are interrupted at once, as in the instance of drowning or the effectual application of a cord."‡

In the case of a woman who had been strangled *per manum* by two men, Littre found the tympanum of the left ear lacerated, and from it flowed about an ounce of blood; the vessels of the brain were unusually turgid; red blood was extra-

* Smith on Medical Evidence, p. 290. Paris, vol. 3, p. 30.

† Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 6, p. 316, 331. It is insinuated that Capt. Goodere was insane. See Croker's Boswell, vol. 1, p. 332.

‡ Smith, p. 229.

vasated in the ventricles, and also on the base of the cranium; the lungs were greatly distended, and their membrane very vascular. Not more than an ounce of blood, however, was contained in the right ventricle of the heart, and it was fluid and frothy, like that of the lungs.*

In a case of murder by manual strangulation, detected with great skill by Dr. Paris, patches of extravasated blood were seen on the throat, with abrasions, corresponding to the nails. On the chest, also, bruises were noticed. On dissection, the brain was found excessively turgid with blood, but all the other organs were healthy. The murderer, previous to execution, confessed that he had strangled his victim with a pocket handkerchief, but from the difficulty of completing it, he was compelled to press his knees upon the chest.†

John Nuttal was convicted of the murder of his pregnant mistress, at Lancaster, (England,) in 1817. She was found dead in a well; there were bruises on the forehead, chin, knees and arms. On the neck there were marks of four nails, one under the right ear, and another under the left jaw, and they had penetrated very deep, and were very distinct; connected with the nail marks, were those of fingers. The brain exhibited an effusion of blood; the dura mater was turgid; the vessels of the pia mater were, in many places, ruptured. The lungs were shrunk or collapsed, and there was no water in them or the stomach. There was a great accumulation of blood in the heart.‡

As to the question, *Whether the strangulation is the effect of suicide, homicide or accident?* it may be observed, that it would appear extremely difficult for a person to destroy himself in this way, since the hands lose their strength the moment compression begins. Cases, however, are so numerous, where the object has been completed, and where no reasonable doubt can exist as to the cause, that we cannot deny its possibility. All marks of violence are, however, of course, proofs of homicide; and the circular mark itself is *prima facie* evidence, unless contradicted by sufficient testimony.

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 139.

† Paris, vol. 3, p. 29.

‡ Remarkable Trials. vol. 6, p. 241.

As illustrations of the remark just made, I may mention several well authenticated cases. The following were communicated by Dr. Desgranges of Lyons, to Foderé, in 1811: A man was found in a hay-loft, strangled by a handkerchief, which had been tightened with a stick. The judicial tribunal consulted the Society of Medicine, whether this was a case of possible suicide. The Society replied, *that it was possible*; and Dr. Desgranges observes, that in a person who is firmly determined to destroy himself, it might be accomplished by producing several rapid revolutions of the stick, and in this way tightening the handkerchief effectually.

In another case, an old man in the hospital used the handle of a pot as the instrument for tightening the ligature. He was found lying on the bed, with his face turned to the mat-trass; the chin was cut by the pieces of the pot; the head was dark-coloured, the face swelled, the lips thickened, and a sanguineous saliva issued from the mouth.*

In 1834, an insane female strangled herself at the Hotel Dieu, by tying a handkerchief round her neck from behind forwards, and taking a knot, and then returning it and making a second one. She was seen alive in her ward an hour previous, and was found inanimate, with her head hanging out of the bed. The eyes were much injected; the mark of the ligature was deep, ecchymosed, and partially excoriated. What adds to the interest of this case, is the fact that the right hand wanted four of its fingers. It is well asked, whether the presumption would not have been almost irresistible of murder, if this female had been thus found in a solitary place, instead of the open, frequented ward of an hospital? Dupuytren, in remarking on it, observes, that in these cases, strong proofs are often derived from the posture and features of the deceased.†

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 173.

“A navy surgeon, a friend of mine, related to me the case of a Malay, who, on board of a man-of-war in the East Indies, had made repeated attempts to commit suicide, and at last succeeded by the means alluded to in the text. He tied a handkerchief round his neck, and with a small stick, twisted it several times, and then secured it behind his ear to prevent its untwisting. Jealousy was the cause assigned for the act.”

DUNLOP.

† Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 10, p. 152. London Medical Gazette, vol. 12, p. 126. Similar cases are related in Annales, vol. 8, p. 429; London Medical Repository, vol. 28, p. 347.

All who are acquainted with the eventful history of Bonaparte, and who is not? must recollect the sudden death of GENERAL PICHEGRU. This distinguished soldier was confined as a state prisoner in the Temple. On the 5th of April, 1804, he was as well as usual, and at ten o'clock in the evening the keeper locked the door of his prison and took the key. The General was heard to cough during the night, but at seven o'clock, when they came to light the fire, he was found dead on his bed. A commission was appointed to examine the body, among whom were several medical men. They found twelve hours after death, a circular mark around his neck about two fingers wide, produced by a black silk cravat strongly knotted, and through which a small stick had been passed. This stick was used as a tourniquet to produce the strangulation. They also remarked that one end of the stick lay under the left cheek, where, by an irregular motion of the body, it had caused a slight scratch. The face was ecchymosed, the jaws fixed and the tongue held between the teeth. The body was swollen, the extremities cold, and the muscles of the hands and feet strongly contracted.

From these observations, and taking into view the position of the body, they were of opinion that General Pichegru had strangled himself.

The next day a medical dissection was ordered. The dura mater was injected and slightly adherent. The bloodvessels of the brain filled with blood. The other portions were healthy. So also were the viscera, except that the lungs were gorged and the stomach reddish. The œsophagus was healthy except at the mark of the handkerchief. The examiners repeated their opinion of its being a case of suicide.

Chaussier very justly condemns the palpable deficiencies in these reports. The appearance of the eyes is not noticed, nor the position and attitude of the body. We are not informed at what part of the neck the mark was, whether the inferior or the superior, or how deep, or of what colour.

As to the dissection, it is superficial, notices points which are of no importance, and slurs over the most important subject of inquiry, viz: the state of the neck.

I apprehend that no one can read this statement, and it contains all the medical facts we have on this historical case, without inclining to agree with Chaussier, that although the medical witnesses might be justified in declaring it a case of strangulation, they had no grounds for pronouncing it suicide. Still this is within the range of possibility, if we credit the narratives already given.*

There is another class of cases that may be mistaken for either suicidal or homicidal strangulation, and these lead to grievous mistakes. I refer to instances of apoplexy, occurring in unusual positions of the body, where a strong pressure is necessarily exerted on the neck, and phænomena of strangling indeed, both external and internal, are more or less developed. Several well ascertained cases of this description, where no doubt could exist as to the cause, are mentioned in the journals;† others again have been made the subject of legal investigation.

In a recent instance in France, two individuals were sent to the galleys for the supposed murder of an intoxicated person by strangling; nor was it until after a long revision of the case, and the production of the positive opinion of Foderé,

* Chaussier, p. 279. I subjoin the statement given by one who, if Pichegru was murdered, might probably have directed the commission of the crime. "He was lying, (says Savary, Duke of Rovigo, in his memoirs) on his *right* side, he had put round his neck his own black silk cravat, which he had previously twisted like a small rope; this must have occupied him so long as to afford time for reflection, had he not been resolutely bent on self-destruction. He appeared to have tied the cravat, thus twisted, about his neck, and to have at first drawn it as tight as he could bear it; then to have taken a piece of wood of the length of a finger, which he had broken from a branch which yet lay in the room, (part of a faggot, the relics of which were still in his fireplace;) this he must have slipped between his neck and his cravat, on the right side, and turned round till the moment that reason forsook him. His head had fallen back on the pillow, and compressed the little bit of stick which had prevented the cravat from untwisting. In this situation, apoplexy could not fail to supervene. His hand was still under his head, and almost touched this little tourniquet."

"No human eye (says Sir Walter Scott,) could see into the dark recesses of a state prison; but there were not wanting many who entertained a total disbelief of Pichegru's suicide."

The defective state of the reports, and the evident reluctance of the medical men to pursue the investigation, appears to me most mysterious, if this was a case of suicide. Under other circumstances, French medico-legal examiners rather err in the opposite extreme—in being too diffuse and minute. Bonaparte, however, when at St. Helena, steadily denied that Pichegru had been murdered. "The very uncommon mode of his death (he said) proved the contrary."

† Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 2, p. 440, 447.

Marc and others, that the case presented not a single feature beyond that of ordinary apoplexy, that the sentence was reversed. The physicians who examined the body, and who deposed on the trial, gave a similar opinion; yet popular prejudice was sufficient to condemn the accused.* Without, however, going into the details of this, I prefer noticing a somewhat similar case that happened some years since in New-York.

Frederick L. Teige, a man advanced in years, and who, a few weeks previous, had arrived in this country from Switzerland, was found dead in New-York, on the morning of Saturday the 28th May, 1825. He lay in a gutter on his face, and underneath his face, which did not touch the earth, in consequence of the narrowness of the gutter, was a puddle of congealed blood, extending from ten to fourteen inches. On raising the body, fresh blood was observed on the nose and face, and indeed some dropped from the face, while in the act of lifting him. The right hand lay upon his back, and the right foot was drawn up. The body lay at the foot of a declivity of about twelve feet, and the bank was composed of very loose sand. No marks of struggling, such as breaking away the sand were noticed, and there was no sand on his back. His hat lay somewhat on the hillock, and there were marks of five or six steps on the bank, of one person.

The coroner stated that around the neck of the deceased, and between his vest and shirt, there was a loose green cord. The neck cloth was very tight, as also the shirt collar—so tight indeed that the witness could scarcely introduce his finger between the neck and collar, and after unbuttoning it, he could not have buttoned it again. None of the clothes were torn, nor was the cravat out of place. On the neck, the marks of a thumb and three fingers were visible, but he could not say whether they were of the right hand or the left hand.

Dr. Graves, who examined the body in the first instance, stated that there was a slight wound on the left temple, and an abrasion of the skin on the top of the nose, while on the

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 7, p. 568, 615.

right side of the head, the skin was rubbed off to the extent of a dollar. The skin was also rubbed on the right and left side of the throat. On removing the skull cap, a large quantity of serum was discovered.

Drs. Francis and Anderson, who subsequently made an examination, found the countenance very turgid, the eyes protruded, the tongue pressed firmly against the teeth, and on the neck a strong mark, distinctly visible, and nearly as low down as the collar of the shirt. The jugulars were distended and the neck swollen. The right side of the heart was engorged, and also the lungs. The larynx, in its internal surface, was discoloured, owing to the effusion of blood. No marks of injury appeared on the body.

It was proved on the trial, that the deceased was a stout, athletic man, of a large neck and full frame; that he had been for years in habits of gross intoxication; that he had been drunk every day of the week of his death, and extremely so, on the Friday evening at 10 o'clock, preceding the Saturday morning when he was found dead.

Two of his countrymen who had come over with him in the same vessel, were charged with his murder, but the evidence against them was so slight, that the jury acquitted them without leaving their seats.*

The grand medico-legal question in this case evidently is, *Whether death was caused by accident or design?* I incline to the former opinion: from the habits and make of the deceased, from the external appearance and position of the body; from the extreme tightness of the shirt collar acting on this state and position of body; and from the absence of other marks of injury. Among the doubtful circumstances, however, are the mark of fingers on the neck; but it is possible that these may have been made by the deceased himself, in an effort to unbutton his collar. The appearances, on dissection, will of course apply to either supposition, while the blood was evidently discharged from the nose.

It is an interesting inquiry, whether proofs of strangulation can be found on the dead body some time after decease or in-

* New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 5, p. 432.

terment. In the instance of a child of eighteen months, first strangled and afterwards thrown into the water, the body examined ten days after death, was found far gone in putrefaction; but on the fore part of the neck, over the windpipe, was a softish furrow, with a hardened ridge both above and below.*

But the most remarkable instance, is one that has recently been investigated in France. I copy the leading details from a London journal; but the whole case is given in the *Annales D'Hygiène*.

"In the year 1821, a widow lady of the name of Houet, residing in the city of Paris, disappeared; and certain persons, Bastien, Robert, and Robert's wife, who had taken the house, No. 81, Rue de Vaugirard, were suspected of having made away with her. A judicial inquiry was pending ever since, in the Court of Assize; but the accused, for want of evidence, had been set at liberty. Not long ago, however, some information was obtained touching a body said to have been buried for about eleven years in a particular garden. An investigation was accordingly set on foot; and by the dint of patient and ably directed research, such satisfactory evidence was procured of the identity of the remains, and of the manner of the death, that the prisoners were convicted, and condemned to the galleys for life.

"The first part of the inquiry—the juridical examination—was conducted by M. Boys de Loury. After excavating different parts of the garden for about five hours, one of the workmen hit upon a hollow spot, in which there were bones. The greatest care was taken to uncover them with the least

* Syme's *Justiciary Reports*, p. 266.

I add the following in this place, merely as a historical curiosity. "March 16, 1814. On opening a vault at St. Maryport church, Bristol, the workmen discovered, very deeply concealed, a coffin of great antiquity. It is generally supposed that the corpse it contained was the body of — Yeoman, sheriff of Bristol, in 1643, when the city was surrendered to the parliamentary army by Prince Rupert. Mr. Yeoman was hanged in Wine-street, opposite his own house, by order of Fairfax, for his attachment to the royal cause. The body was in the highest state of preservation, handsomely accoutred in the costume of the day, with gloves similar to those which the sheriffs at present wear. *And there were considerable tumours visible in the neck, which inclined several medical gentlemen, who inspected the body, to be of opinion that they were occasioned by strangulation.*" (*Edinburgh Annual Register*, vol. 7, *Chronicle*, p. 30.)

possible disturbance; they were evidently those of a human body, reduced almost to a perfect skeleton. A drawing was made of the parts *in situ*. The figure reposed on the left side; the head was bent forward on the neck; the vertebral column was curved; the right fore arm was raised, so that the bones of the hand nearly touched those of the face. The pelvis was turned obliquely upwards, resting on the left haunch. The thigh bones were raised considerably, and the legs were crossed beneath them. The colour of the remains generally, was between an ochre and a brown; and when the earthy matter was removed from some of the long bones, the uncovered parts were found to be of a deep red colour.

“The grave was four feet deep, funnel shaped, measuring five feet and a half in length at its upper part, but at the bottom, only two and a half; its greatest breadth was about two feet. Some lime-stone had been placed over the body, so as to form a sort of vault. Having made these general observations, the parts were next examined. The skull was small and lengthy in its shape; it seemed, by the way, from the position of the head, that the body had been thrown into the grave head foremost. The parietal bones were very yielding; the sutures were well knit; the teeth white, and had been used with care; three molars wanting, and one of the incisors carious. A small quantity of light coloured or ruddy hair was found, having some gray mixed with it.

“The state of the neck was particularly striking: the third, fourth, fifth and sixth cervical vertebræ, as well as the right clavicle, were held together by a blackish mass, in the composition of which there could not be recognized any tissue. This mass was surrounded at its lower part by several twists of a cord, two lines in diameter; the cord was in a very decayed condition, and no knot could be found upon it; its direction was exactly horizontal.

Among the bones of the left hand was found a gold ring, of small diameter, carved in *facettes*; and several small, well formed finger nails were also discovered. The pelvis, from its shape and proportions, could only be that of a woman. Some portion of cloth, probably part of a stocking, was found near

the legs; but upon exposure to the air, it rapidly crumbled to dust.

"Other reporters, MM. Orfila, Marc, Barruel and Chevallier, were afterwards added to M. Boys de Loury; and three or four elaborate documents were drawn up, of the first of which we give the result.

"From the preceding facts, we feel ourselves justified in concluding: 1. That these bones are those of a human skeleton. 2. That the skeleton is that of a female. 3. That this female had attained the age of from 60 to 70. 4. That her stature was about 4 feet 8 or 9 inches (nearly 5 feet English.) 5. That the hair of the female, which was of a bright blond colour in youth, was mixed with gray at the time of her death. 6. That the hands were small. 7. That during life, the bones had never suffered any injury. 8. That this woman died of strangulation, and that the act was, to all appearance, homicidal. 9. That the body must have lain for several years in the earth.

"The prisoners, who had been long suspected, were at length brought to trial, (nearly twelve years after the murder,) and have been condemned for the remainder of their lives to forced labor. They had a narrow escape of the guillotine; only for some mitigatory circumstances which induced the jury to recommend them to mercy, they would have been executed."*

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 11, p. 117. *London Medical Gazette*,

NOTE. Just as I was expecting the proof-sheet of these pages, I received No. 1 of Vol. 9 of the *Western Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences*, which contains an interesting paper on *Manual Strangulation*, by Professor Gross. I extract from it the following case, and sundry experiments:

Mrs. Getter was strangled, near Easton, (Pennsylvania,) on the night of the 27th of February, 1833, by her husband. She was strong and robust, with a short thick neck, and a broad expanded chest. The next day, an examination was made. The countenance was full and bloated: the lips tumid, and of a dark bluish tint; the tongue slightly livid, but did not project beyond the teeth; the mouth was filled with froth, and the vessels of its lining membrane greatly distended; the jaws nearly closed; the eyes prominent and half open, and turgid; the ears and temples of a dark colour, owing to engorgement of the veins. On the right side of the throat was an indentation, as if made by a thumb or finger nail; it extended into the true skin, and was about half an inch long, and the twelfth of an inch in width. There was also an abrasion of the upper part of the larynx.

On dissection, the veins of the neck bled very profusely; both carotids were empty. Beneath the muscles on the left side of the neck, towards the upper part of the larynx, was a slight extravasation of blood, corresponding to the external mark. The wind-

J. Of persons found smothered.

Smothering is the covering of the mouth and nostrils in any way, so as to prevent the free ingress and egress of air. It happens most frequently with children, either as an accident or a crime—and in the former case, from *overlaying* them, as it is called. This occurs from a pillow, bolster or bed clothes coming in contact with their face in such a manner that their struggles cannot remove it.

In a case of a child six months old, which died from being wrapped up too closely by the parents, who were taking it into the country to nurse, the integuments of the chest, arms and head were of a dark hue. The mouth was open and fingers bent. The veins of the heart gorged with blood. The left lung natural, but the right one bright red. The trachea and bronchiæ filled with a reddish froth. The brain turgid, and its vessels in every part, even in the substance of the brain, filled, while three drachms of serum were found between the tentorium and cerebellum.*

Adults, in a state of intoxication or debility, may also be destroyed by getting into a posture which prevents the transit of air to the lungs, and then being unable to extricate them-

pipe was filled with frothy matter, and its lining membrane thoroughly injected; the diaphragm was arched; the lungs of a deep black colour, and filled with dark venous blood mixed with froth; the auricles and ventricles of both sides were filled with black blood, and the coronary vessels were much injected; the bladder was empty and contracted: All the other parts were healthy.

The brain was not examined. Regretting this omission, Dr. Gross was induced to perform some experiments on animals, for the purpose of ascertaining its state. Dogs and rabbits were the subjects, and they were strangled by the hand. In the former, the urine and faeces were discharged almost immediately after pressure was made. The external appearances corresponded to those observed in the human subject. The bloodvessels were in a similar state, but the lining membrane of the air passages was white in two cases out of three. The lungs were not in every instance congested, but the heart was distended in each case. In the brain, the vessels of the dura or pia mater were injected; the cerebral substance was darker than usual; and in one instance, there was a slight extravasation of blood at the base of the brain, and an injected state of the membranes of the spinal column. In no case was there any blood in the ventricles of the brain, or any extraordinary congestion of its vessels.

Dr. Gross very properly cautions the medical examiner not to mistake the effects of apoplexy, hysteria, epilepsy or intoxication, for those of manual strangulation. In each of the above diseases, persons suddenly seized with fatal symptoms, may, in their agony, apply their hands to the throat, and thus produce marks on it. The nature of the case, however, will generally explain it, if a cautious inspection be made.

* London Medical and Physical Journal, December, 1827. A case of inflammation of the lungs in a young infant mistaken for criminal suffocation, is given in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 7, p. 621.

selves. Thus Dr. Roget speaks of persons being buried completely under a mass of earth that has fallen upon them, and he mentions the following remarkable instance in which life was nearly lost from inattention to the requisites for respiration. "An athletic black, of pugilistic celebrity, had been selected, from the fine form of his chest, and well marked expression of his muscles, as an academic model. It was wished to obtain a cast of his body, but this being attempted at one operation, and in one entire piece, as soon as the plaster began to set, he felt on a sudden deprived of the power of respiration, and to add to his misfortune, was cut off from the means of expressing his distress. His situation, however, was, fortunately perceived just in time to save his life, by breaking his bonds and releasing him from the extreme peril in which they had placed him."*

In the previous edition, I made the following remark. "Smothering will seldom be used as an instrument of homicide, since a moderate degree of resistance can generally prevent its effectual application." I am sorry to add that it has, notwithstanding, of late years, and with the use of aids to prevent all resistance, been made the means of murder. I refer to the case of the notorious Burke and Hare, who, in 1828, thus killed several persons at Edinburgh. From the testimony of accomplices, it appears that the deceased (Margery Campbell,) while in a state of intoxication, was struck down to a sitting posture on the floor; that Burke threw himself on her, kept her down by the weight of his body, and covering her mouth and nose with one hand, while he applied the other under her chin, held her thus for ten or twelve minutes, till she was dead. The body, examined two days after death, presented the following appearances. The joints flaccid; features composed, red, and rather more turgid than natural; lips dark; conjunctivæ of the eyes, even in the horizontal position of the body, much injected with blood; a little fluid blood on the left cheek, apparently from the nostrils; tongue not protruded; the scarf skin under the chin much ruffled, and the surface of the true skin dry and brown when

* Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, vol. 1, p. 177.

denuded, but without blood or surrounding ecchymosis; the integuments every where free from lividity, except on the face; no injury or effusion about the windpipe or cartilages, but the os hyoides and thyroid cartilages farther apart than usual, in consequence of stretching their interposed ligament. The internal organs very healthy, and particularly the lungs. The right side of the heart and its veins filled with very fluid and black blood.

There were other injuries present, particularly in the spinal canal, but these had been inflicted after death, in consequence of forcibly doubling up the body to enclose it in a box. I have noticed them in a former page.

On the trial, Professor Christison testified, that from the unequivocal marks of violence in the contusions; from the absence of any appearances of natural death; from her being seen alive and in good health a few hours before, and from the blood on the floor where the body lay, the probability of death from violence was strong; but he declined a more positive opinion. In his subsequent remarks on the case, he has well remarked, that there is a mistaken idea prevalent, that the signs of suffocation are very obvious and characteristic. "It ought to be distinctly understood by every medical man, that such appearances are very far from being always present." And the reason is manifest, since the mode of procuring death is such as to leave few or any indications, particularly if the murdered person has been previously rendered insensible by opium or alcohol. And in proportion to the rapidity with which death is induced, will be the absence of all external or internal signs. There is no opportunity, says Dr. Roget, for the accumulation of blood in the venous system. The body accordingly will present no discoloration of the skin, no turgescence of the veins, no engorgement of the pulmonary vessels.*

In death by smothering, then, circumstantial evidence must be the principal, if not the only, means of ascertaining whether the event has been produced by crime or by accident.

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 31, p. 236. Syme's Justiciary Reports, p. 371.

Dr. Gordon Smith adverts to a mode of suicide said to be practiced by negroes, which is that of doubling the tongue and swallowing it down into the fauces so low as completely to choke the individual.* Dr. Horner of Philadelphia, however, besides questioning the possibility of doing this, denies ever having heard of it, although he has passed many years of his life among a negro population.†

I find the following in the Rev. Dr. Walsh's notices of Brazil, confirmatory of the common opinion. "The wretched slave in Brazil often anticipates the result of chastisement, by inflicting death upon himself in an extraordinary manner. They have a method of burying their tongue in their throat, in such a way as to produce suffocation. A friend of mine was passing through the carioca, when a slave was tied up and flogged. After a few lashes he hung his head apparently lifeless, and when taken down he was actually dead, and his tongue found wedged in the œsophagus, so as completely to close the trachea."‡

While on this point I must not omit noticing a remarkable case mentioned by Dr. Wagner, as occurring in Austria in 1833.

"A criminal who had been shut up alone in a dark dungeon, when visited by his keeper not long after, was found lying dead on the floor. It was thought that he had a fit of apoplexy, and a vein was opened, but to no purpose. It was for the first time noticed that he had a foreign body in his mouth, and it proved to be a piece of woollen cloth two ells long and a quarter broad; a shawl in fact, which the wretched man had thrust into his throat.§

I may add that in some suspicious cases, tumours pressing on the organs of respiration, or foreign bodies found in the trachea or œsophagus, have explained the accidental cause of death.||

* Smith, p. 231.

† American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 2, p. 182. ‡ Vol. 2, p. 197.

§ Dr. Cummin, in London Medical Gazette, vol. 13, p. 973.

|| "The smothering which is probably most directly fatal, is that which takes place when in great crowds, children and delicate persons are so crushed by multitudes of human beings, as in theatres, or in cases of alarms of fire, that no time is left to allow the chest to expand in those individuals who are trodden under foot." (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 398.)

K. *Of persons found drowned.*

The observations that have been already made on the nature of asphyxia, will obviate the necessity of again entering on it, except so far as the phenomena have strict reference to the present cause of death.

It is evident that the subject is an intricate one, and it is equally so that too little attention has been paid to the various modes in which death is produced. This will explain why, although a favorite inquiry with physiologists, its facts have been disputed and its characteristics doubted.

Dr. Desgranges of Lyons, was, I believe, the person who first (in 1790) suggested that there were distinct modes of death operating in the drowned, and his division has received the sanction of Foderé and Marc.* He was induced to make it from observing turgescence of the countenance in some cases, and its paleness in others.

One of the modes he denominates *asphyxia by suffocation*. This is probably the most common, and occurs when a person in full possession of his faculties, is immersed. After ineffectual struggles, some water enters the trachea and bronchiæ, mixes with the air contained in them, and forms the frothy mucus so commonly perceived. It is probable also, that from the convulsive action of the glottis and muscles of the throat, some water is taken into the stomach. The contest cannot however continue long, the blood is determined to the head, and as it is not decarbonized, its venous qualities operate on the brain. The lungs are unable to perform their functions, and the body falls insensible to the bottom of the water. It is in these cases that we should expect to see a lividness of the countenance, although this, as we shall see, is not invariable.†

Another mode of death is termed *nervous or syncopal asphyxia*, and it is well illustrated in a case related by Plater. A female convicted of infanticide, was condemned to be drowned. She fainted on being immersed into the water, and remained there a quarter of an hour. On being drawn out,

* Marc, p. 165. Foderé, vol. 2, p. 296. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 620.

† Roget ut antea, p. 173.

she recovered her senses.* Thus fear, or coldness of the water, or a blow on the head in falling, or absolute intoxication, may suspend as it were the vital functions, and throw the nervous system into a state of inaction. Here of course, there will be no struggle, and we can only expect to find the marks of simple asphyxia, such as paleness of the face and body, owing to a spasm of the cutaneous vessels; the presence of a little water, but no froth in the trachea, and the internal organs but little differing from their natural state.

Dr. Marc has added a third to these, which he styles *asphyxia from cerebral congestion*, and refers to it such cases as are marked by an apoplectic habit, or where persons fall into the water, when in a state of intoxication, or with a full stomach.†

In many instances, the first and last are, in his opinion, united, and suffocation and apoplexy, according to circumstances, act, reciprocally, either as the essential or aggravating cause of death.

After this outline of the probable modes of death, I need hardly state, that in legal medicine, the leading question, in every case is, *Whether there are any marks that distinguish death by submersion, from death previous to submersion?* Or in other words, Whether a person was thrown when alive, or after death, into the water?

I shall arrange my remarks on this in the following order: First, state the ancient doctrines; secondly, those most commonly received at the present day. It will then be necessary to comment on the different marks, and to show how far their value is disputed, and to endeavour to fix a proper estimate on them. In connexion with this, I shall afterwards consider the effects of continued immersion on the dead body, and the changes produced by it. Some medico-legal cases will form a proper conclusion.

I. Ambrose Paré has stated in a few words, the ancient opinions on this subject. He observes, that a surgeon will

* Marc, p. 165. This punishment was in compliance with the ancient provisions of the Caroline code. The criminal was put into a sack and sunk into the water.

† We may also add to this, drowning in marshes, or stagnant canals or streams, where deleterious gases are disengaged.

find the following appearances on the body of a person who has been thrown into the water, while living: The stomach and intestinal canal are filled with water; a glairy mucus issues from the nose, and sometimes there is a bleeding from it; there is a frothy appearance about the mouth, and the extremities of the fingers will be found excoriated, as if, in dying, they had grasped the sand, or some other hard substance. On the contrary, those who have been thrown, when dead, into the water, will have no tumour in the stomach or abdomen, since all the passages to them were closed by the absence of inspiration; the nose and mouth will present none of the appearances mentioned above, nor will there be any excoriation of the fingers.*

These rules were considered orthodox until the commencement of the eighteenth century, and Deveaux reports several cases which were decided according to them.

II. I believe I shall be correct in stating, that the following marks laid down by Dr. Marc, are recognized by the great body of modern physiologists, as deserving of peculiar attention. The value attached to each is to be presently mentioned.

Signs that a persons has been drowned while living.

As to the external appearance of the body,

1. The eyes are half open; the pupils much dilated; the skin is remarkable for its paleness, originating in a spasm of the cutaneous vessels; the tongue approaches to the under edges of the lips; and these, as well as the nostrils, are covered with a frothy mucus. Occasionally when the paleness is wanting, the head will be bloated, the face red, and all the symptoms which denote a determination of blood to the brain will be present.

2. There is excoriation at the end of the fingers, and dirt or sand found under the nails.

As to the appearances on dissection,

3. A greater or less fulness of the bloodvessels of the brain, according to the violence and length of the struggle.

* Quoted by Foderé, vol. 3, p. 80.

4. The right side of the heart, and its vessels, filled with blood; the left either empty, or not containing more than half that in the other side.

5. The epiglottis, according to some, is found elevated.

6. The diaphragm depressed into the abdomen.

7. The blood in a permanently liquid state, and oozing from the body on the least touch of the scalpel.

8. A watery froth, which is sometimes bloody, found in the trachea and bronchiæ; to which is added, by late experimenters, the presence of a small quantity of water in the lungs.

9. Water is occasionally found in the stomach.

10. The fulness of the bladder, and the reddened state of the viscera.

On the other hand, the *signs that denote death previous to submersion*, are,

1. The presence of lesions which could not be inflicted under water, such as the marks of ecchymosis, or of a cord around the neck; wounds from fire-arms, or the traces of poisons.

2. The absence of the external characters mentioned above.

3. The absence of water or foreign substances in the trachea and stomach.

4. The lungs being in a state of collapse, and not gorged with blood; the abdomen flat, and the diaphragm in a state of natural tension.

5. The blood in a coagulable state.*

III. In proceeding to review the marks of death by submersion, I regret to state that many of them have singly been proved to be of little value. The variety to be expected in the *external appearance*, has been already explained, and it is important to keep it in view when ascertaining the particular mode of death. I have mentioned in what cases paleness is most frequently seen, and when fulness and discoloration.

We must, however, recollect that a bloated, livid countenance is not uncommon from other causes of death. Fothergill suggested as a characteristic in these instances, that the eyes are found half open, and the pupil much dilated; but this last

* Marc, p. 172 to 182. Orfila as hereafter quoted.

may have been owing to the use of narcotics, and thus death may have preceded drowning. The same remark applies to the appearance of the eyes: spasmodic diseases, amongst others, will leave them in that state. Froth at the mouth, and protrusion of the tongue, accompany convulsions and epilepsy; while redness of the visage, and swelling of the head, are the most common signs of death from apoplexy.* It is important, however, to notice the situation of the tongue, as in many instances it is found protruded between the teeth;† and although this occurs also with the strangled or hung, yet when all suspicion of this is obviated, it may assist in forming the history of the case.

As to the paleness of the skin, Orfila is disposed, from his experiments, to ascribe this to prolonged immersion, rather than to the kind of death. He states, that in those who have lain long in the water, the integuments of the legs will become indigo-coloured, and then brownish, on exposure to the air, while the rest of the body is very white; but the moment it also reaches the air, it is successively changed to brown or green, beginning at the chest. Of course, a still longer continuance in the water will, with advancing putrefaction, cause abrasions of the skin, which must not be mistaken for the result of injuries.‡

The excoriation at the ends of the fingers, and the presence of dirt or sand under the nails, were formerly much depended upon; and Ambrose Paré and Bohn in particular rely greatly on it, since it indicates, according to them, the last efforts of the *living* individual to save himself from death. Like the last, however, it is rather to be deemed a supplementary than a conclusive proof. A man may fall, during a state of intoxication, into the water, and never make an effort to save himself; or he may be in a state of syncope when drowned. No mark of exertion will then be found;§ while, on the other hand, a

* Marc, p. 173.

† Devergié, Roget.

‡ In quoting Orfila, I refer to his *Leçons*, 2d edition, vol. 2, p. 334. His essay on this subject originally appeared in the *Archives Générales*, and there is a good abstract in the *London Medical Repository*, vol. 28, p. 541.

§ So also when noticing Devergié, I quote from his paper on the signs of death before and after submersion. *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 2, p. 430.

§ Mahon, vol. 3, p. 3.

dead body may, from being thrown from a high place, contract this appearance in rolling over. The depth of water in these instances should be noticed, since there may be an extinction of life before coming at the bottom.

We come next to the internal appearances.

A greater or less fullness of the bloodvessels of the head, together with the fullness of the right side of the heart and its vessels, has been much relied upon as a sign by several anatomists. Hopffenstock, a physician of Prague, in his dissection of the drowned, observed constantly a great accumulation of blood in the cerebral vessels, the jugular veins, the right auricle and ventricle, and pulmonary artery, while on the contrary, the left side of the heart was completely empty.* Mahon, Kite and Walter, have confirmed this by their investigations. Goodwyn, however, in his experiments, found the external surface of the brain darker than usual, but its vessels were not turgid. The right ventricle was filled with black blood, but the left, instead of being empty, was noticed by him as being about half filled with blood of the same colour.† Orfila concurs with this last. Devergié says, that the right side is but rarely distended with much blood, although he concedes that generally, but not always, there is more in the right than in the left side.‡ Orfila also adds, that the right ventricle is of a blackish brown, while the left is a clear rose colour, and the right cavities retain contractility longer than those of the left.

As to the brain, it is not always gorged with blood. Certainly, in those who die from *syncopal asphyxia*, this mark will be far from being a striking one, while, on the contrary, should apoplexy have occurred previous to drowning, we might expect its presence.

According to Detharding, the *epiglottis* is pushed down in the drowned so as to close the larynx. The correctness of this is totally denied by Orfila.

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 90.

† Enquiry, p. 4 and 5.

‡ Devergié remarks, the very striking difference between the two sides of the heart in persons suffocated by carbonic acid gas. There is nothing like this, he adds, in the drowned.

The depression of the diaphragm into the abdomen, with the elevation of the chest, is considered by Hebenstreit, as an essential character. It is wanting, according to him, in those who are drowned after death, and its occurrence is attempted to be explained on the idea, that the last act of breathing is inspiration. But unfortunately for the value of this sign, Orfila informs us, that the result of more than fifty dissections of persons drowned, has been the opposite, and consequently proved that the last act is not inspiration. At all events, I apprehend that there is little or no variation in the situation of the diaphragm, whatever be the cause of violent death.

The fluidity of the blood was formerly greatly insisted on as an important proof of death by drowning, and it was asserted to have been so seen, even in the vessels which enter the bones.* The value of this test, as a mark of the violent termination of life, has been already noticed. It occurs in many other kinds of violent death, and in some instances, of natural disease. While, therefore, its diagnostic character is destroyed, although we must allow that it is most commonly found fluid in the drowned, yet even this is not invariable. Lafosse long since, and Avisard, Orfila and Devergié recently, have in a few cases, found coagulated blood in the auricles or ventricles, of those drowned while living.

It is stated as a remarkable fact, that in dogs drowned, the blood is always coagulated.†

The next mark is, *the presence of a small quantity of water, very frothy, and sometimes coloured with blood, in the trachea and bronchiæ*. This has been a subject of great speculation among physiologists, and formerly the water thus found in the lungs and stomach, was supposed to be the cause of death. Becker, a German physician, was the first to controvert this opinion. He published a work at the commencement of the eighteenth century, in which he denied that water was always present in these organs, and illustrated his position by several dissections of the human body, as well as by experiments on

* Marc, p. 179. Thus, (says he) if the pericranium be separated, and the blood taken up with a sponge, it will immediately re-appear along the surface of the bone.

† Orfila.

animals.* Some distinguished men, as Littre, Senac and Petit, embraced his views, although towards the end of the last century, many physiologists, as Haller, De Haen, and Louis, inclined again to the ancient idea.†

I have already sufficiently explained the commonly received cause of its formation, and must now endeavour to present the results obtained by a host of experimenters.

Wepfer and Waldsmidt did not observe it in animals, which they drowned. Morgagni could not find it in guinea pigs drowned by him. Portal did not observe it. Evers made a number of experiments at Gottingen in 1753, on cats, and always found it, but could discover none in the bodies of two persons who were drowned when intoxicated.‡ Belloc remarks, that he has not found it in cases where persons were undoubtedly drowned while living§. And he explains this variety, by suggesting that the last act of the drowning person may be either expiration or inspiration. If the latter, a small quantity of water may reach the lungs, and mixing with the air there, form the froth, but probably not in the latter case. We shall presently see that this was an approach to what is probably the actual reason.

On the other hand, Louis drowned animals in coloured fluids, and found froth similarly coloured in the trachea and bronchiæ.|| Roesler, in forty-five experiments, found in every case, a small quantity of frothy mucus at the bifurcation of the trachea. Marc, Mayer of Bonn, Dr. Williams of Liverpool, Devergié, and many others, have observed it almost universally.

In order to reconcile this discrepancy, (and noticing the observation of Piorry, that froth would not occur in an animal, who while drowning, was kept permanently below the surface of the water,) Orfila was induced to perform experiments on

* This work is published in the *Novellæ* of Valentini. "J. C. Beckeri Paradoxum-Medico-Legale, de submersorum morte, sine pota aqua, 1704," p. 299. See also a notice of this work in the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 24, p. 2512. Bohn of Leipsic published an essay in 1711, in which he advanced the same opinion. See *Memoirs of Literature*, vol. 4, p. 165.

† De Haen's *Ratio Medendi Continuata*, p. 130, &c. Louis' *Memoire sur Les Noyés*.

‡ Foderé, vol. 3, p. 93, 94.

§ Relloc, p. 178.

|| Kay, p. 242.

animals, and found that in every case where the animal came to the surface to breathe, the watery froth was seen in the trachea and bronchiæ. But if these animals were left for some days in the fluid in which they perished, and then exposed to the air, some two or three days before dissection, no trace of froth could be seen. So also with persons found drowned. If the bodies had been in the water for a few hours only, it was present, but not so, if they had lain twelve or fifteen days, or beyond that period.*

The remarks of Devergié on this sign are so important and interesting, that a full abstract of them is proper.

He is of opinion that observers have not sufficiently insisted on its peculiar physical properties. It cannot form without motion, and is the product of an impulse communicated to the fluid and a gas in mutual contact.

The froth of the drowned is commonly of a white colour, and consists of numerous very small bubbles, constituting a lather rather than a froth, properly so called. It never adheres to the trachea by mucus, but is in immediate contact with that tube. All the bubbles that form it, have a watery envelope, easily broken, and often in opening the trachea, the greater part disappears like soap bubbles.

Its production is thus evidently the result of vitality, for it cannot be formed without this. It is also distinguished from similar appearances in the trachea and bronchiæ. In pneumonia, for example, the *mucus* secreted under the influence of bronchial irritation, is mixed up with the air in the efforts of coughing.

In both cases, whether from disease or drowning, the frothy matter will be formed more easily in the last bronchial ramifications, than in the trachea, since the dimensions of the former being much smaller, are sooner obstructed. And, accor-

* Orfila. He objects to the distinction formerly proposed by Foderé, viz: that the froth in question will not appear in *syncopal asphyxia*, or *asphyxia from cerebral congestion*, but only in *asphyxia from suffocation*, on the ground, that in many instances of the former, although death is sudden, yet some water must enter and thus produce it. Legons, vol. 2, p. 344.

He also suggests as a probable reason of its absence in some cases, that the body is drawn by the feet from the water, and left with the head depending, for some time before examination. The froth that has been formed, may thus flow out with the water contained in these organs, and consequently cannot be found.

dingly, Devergié observes, that the existence of froth in the superior part of the trachea, is a more certain sign of the life of the individual at the moment of submersion, than when it is met in the extreme branches, but the part where it is preserved for the longest period, is at the bifurcation of the trachea. From his experience, it seems that in winter, it can be discovered in most cases during eight or ten days, but after that it completely disappears.

Having thus endeavoured to establish its character, and to explain its absence in some cases, it is necessary to add, that its presence is not by any means an essential cause of death.* It is also said to accompany other diseases and causes of death. Thus, De Haen mentions having seen it in the body of a person, who was hung, and Marc confirms this by a case which he himself examined. In apoplexy, and particularly those cases which arise from an overloaded stomach, it is, according to Chaussier quite common.† It is probable, however, that the application of the distinctions, indicated by Devergié, may aid in establishing the nature of the case.

Intimately connected with this, but which I prefer to consider separately, is the disputed point, whether *water is found in the lungs* of the drowned; and if so, whether it may not

* This is well established by the experiments of Dr. Goodwyn. He made an opening into the trachea of a cat, and through this introduced two ounces of water into the lungs. The animal had immediately a difficulty of breathing, and a feeble pulse. But these symptoms soon abated, and it lived several hours afterwards without much apparent inconvenience. After this, he strangled it, and found two ounces and a half of water in the lungs. Enquiry, p. 17. Prof. Mayer confirmed this opinion by numerous experiments. Among other results, he mentions, that "animals support a considerable quantity of liquid injected into the lungs, without experiencing mortal symptoms from them. Rabbits can support a dose of four ounces and a half in 24 hours. But these injections should be performed by an opening made into the trachea, for if we inject these fluids by the larynx, they excite the most severe symptoms of suffocation, and the animal soon sinks under it. The suspension of respiration during this irritation of the muscles of the larynx by the injection, is the only cause of death." Again. "The symptoms of suffocation, which arise from injections, are not serious, when we inject pure water, but they become so when we take thick fluids, for example, all which obstruct the aërial passages, or some chemical solutions, which, destroying the parenchyma of the lungs, prevent the oxydation of the blood, and produce extravasations of blood, and inflammation in the lobes of the lungs. The fluids and solutions injected into the lungs, are absorbed more or less quickly, according to their nature and degree of concentration. The absorption is in general very great, but less in young and newly born animals than in adults." (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 17, p. 469.)

† Chaussier, p. 45.

have entered after death, thus destroying its value in any disputed case.

Roesler, in his experiments, found froth, but no water. Dr. Mayer of Bonn, on the contrary, in his experiments, performed under all possible circumstances, uniformly found it. "He arrived at the conclusion, that in every instance of death by drowning, provided death really arises from the mere obstruction of breathing by the water, and not from apoplexy, or some other affection, occurring at the moment of immersion, water will be found in the lungs. He has made the trial with pure water; with water coloured by red lead or cinnabar, and with a solution of prussiate of potash, which was sought for in the lungs, by the test of the muriate of iron; and in every instance, whether the animal was allowed to rise to the surface or not, whether it was drowned in cold or in warm water, and whatever was the species of animal, he found water, not only in the windpipe and its great ramifications, but likewise in the minute bronchial tubes. Sometimes it was found in substance, but more commonly in the form of froth; and he attributes the non-discovery of water, by some experimenters, to their always having expected to find it in substance."*

Piolett, a French military surgeon, drowned dogs, cats and rabbits in oil, and always found from two to four ounces of that fluid in the air passages. And he explains the removal of fluid from the lungs in those who recover, on the principle of absorption.†

Dr. Edward Jenner Coxe, of Philadelphia, from a number of well conducted experiments, makes the following deductions. 1. When an animal is immersed in any fluid, and taken out previous to the last efforts of respiration, none of the fluid will have entered the lungs, while in the stomach will be found one or two ounces. 2. When water is found in the lungs of an animal, it is absolutely necessary that the animal be under water, when making its last efforts to breathe.‡

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 216.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 25, p. 375.

‡ North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 2, p. 286.

Dr. Berger, of Geneva, found that the air remaining in the lungs of drowned persons had lost nearly all its oxygen. (Copland's Dictionary, p. 132.)

Orfila and Devergié, each state, that in many instances, they have seen more or less of water in the lungs.

Considering this then established, by the concurrent testimony of competent experimenters, it remains to ascertain whether fluid will not enter the lungs after death. This is unequivocally asserted by Orfila and Piorry. Dogs killed by strangulation, were immersed, and after a short time, water was found in their lungs, the quantity depending on the position of the body. If this was vertical, the fluid was seen even in the extreme bronchial ramifications. And this was distinctly proved with coloured fluids, such as ink, Prussian blue, &c. The experiments of Mr. Johnson, of Torrington, also justify such an opinion.* Orfila subsequently repeated the experiment on the human dead body, with similar results.

From these facts, he is of course not disposed to attach much value to it as a distinctive mark. The only circumstances that, according to him, render its presence a probable proof of submersion during life, are, 1. That the liquid found shall be identical with that in which the person has been drowned. Hence the presence of any foreign substances, as mud, weeds, gravel, &c. exactly resembling those in the water, is a strong corroborating fact.† 2. That the water has not been injected after death. And 3. That the body has not remained so long in the water in a vertical position, that, by its weight, it may have penetrated into the bronchiæ.

* Dr. Carson, in commenting on these last, advances the opinion, that the water enters the lungs by imbibition. While under water, the body sustains the weight of a column of fluid; but when removed, the abdomen and chest, being elastic parts, will gradually expand, and the lungs may thus imbibe the fluid that has filled the windpipe and its ramifications. (*Lancet*, vol. 12, p. 139.)

† "Unfortunately," says our author, "it is very difficult to verify this. The presence of sand or gravel is very uncommon; so much so, that in fifty dissections, I have observed it but once." (Orfila's *Léçons*, 2d edition, vol. 2, p. 347.)

The *London Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 7, p. 446, mentions a recent German case. "An individual, subject to epileptic fits, was found dead in a rivulet, with his face downwards, and the head covered with water, which was not more than a foot deep, and which therefore did not cover more than half his body. On examination, sand and gravel, the largest of which last weighed a drachm, was found in the trachea, below its bifurcation into bronchiæ. Some of the sand, indeed, had entered the pulmonary vesicles. The whole quantity found, weighed between three and four drachms. The size of one of the stones, which exceeded the capacity of the glottis, proves that it could not have entered the trachea by a mere mechanical descent after death, but renders it probable that it was swallowed in the last moments of agony."

As to the presence of *water in the stomach*, we may remark, that it is an accidental circumstance, and in no way connected, as was once supposed, with the cause of death. Goodwyn, Kite, Orfila and others, have proved by their experiments, that a quantity may be swallowed during the struggles of a drowning person; but there are also cases on record, where none was found.

Senac illustrated this subject nearly a hundred years ago, by detailing the method then used in Paris for torturing criminals, and under which the subject occasionally died. The mouth being forcibly kept open with a wedge, and the nostrils closed, a great quantity of water was poured into the person's throat. Respiration was thus prevented, while the irritation of the trachea, in resisting the access of fluid, caused faintings, convulsions, violent agitation of the respiratory organs, rupture of the pulmonary vessels, spitting of blood and death; but *very little water entered either into the lungs or the stomach* of these unfortunate persons. On dissection, however, the usual lesions observed in death from submersion, were apparent.*

While then it is possible that water may be found in the stomachs of those who have been drowned, it becomes a question of some interest, whether it can enter after death. Experiments, so far as they have yet proceeded, are decidedly opposed to this. Goodwyn and Kite never found any in the *intestines* of animals; and Dr. Fine, of Geneva, has ascertained that it cannot be introduced into the stomachs of the dead, except by passing an elastic sound into the *œsophagus*. The sides of that canal, when in a state of inaction, appear to be in close contact.† These results are confirmed by Orfila and

* Smith, p. 210. It was formerly thought, that if no water was found in the stomach or bronchia, death could not have been occasioned by drowning. See the subsequent notice of the trial of Spencer Cowper.

“The common people, who in all countries inherit the cast off prejudices and opinions of their betters, are still of the same opinion, and deeming water in the stomach and lungs the symptom most to be dreaded in cases of drowning, the first indication of cure, therefore, when such an accident occurs, must be to remove it as speedily as possible. Accordingly, when a man is found drowned, the first process adopted is to roll him about on a barrel, to dislodge the fluid, which they look upon as the *origo mali*, from all its creeks and corners, and then to hang him up by the heels to empty it out; as if the human frame were as simple in its construction as a bucket. The Humane Society, some years ago, did a good deal of mischief by giving their sanction, in a pamphlet on the means of restoring suspended animation, to the antiquated processes of throwing tobacco smoke up the rectum, &c.”

DUNLOP.

† Marc, p. 160.

Marc. Dr. Edward Coxe also found, that when an animal is killed, and then immersed for twelve or fourteen hours, the stomach will not contain any of the fluid.* Devergié remarks that the quantity found is generally various, but he has noticed it from a pint to a quart; and he adds that it is a phenomenon indicating the presence of life when it occurred, since deglutition is necessary to produce it.

Orfila therefore deems this the most satisfactory proof we have, provided the water is identified with that out of which the corpse has been taken, and it be proved that it has not been swallowed during life, or injected after death.

Among the occasional appearances to which some observers have been disposed to attach value, may be named that of the *bladder*. Piorry remarks, that in all sudden deaths, this viscus is empty, while he found it full in dogs whom he drowned.† He adds, however, that this fulness disappeared as the body became rigid. Devergié found it to occur in some instances in the human body, and in others not.

The viscera and the intestinal canal are frequently seen high-coloured in the drowned. Dr. Carson indeed remarks, that the lungs particularly will sometimes bear almost the appearance of inflammation.

From this tedious, but necessary review, it will be seen that no single proof taken separately is perfectly satisfactory, and that several must be united in order to arrive at a just conclusion. It is evident that the presence of froth in the ramifications of the bronchiæ, and of water in the stomach, are the two most diagnostic ones.‡

The immediate cause of death in drowning has long been the subject of discussion, but the received doctrine at present

* Dr. DARWALL, in a note, after quoting Dr. Coxe's experiments, showing that ink was found in the lungs of a cat immersed after death, but not in the stomach, observes, that "it is clear that the principal dependence ought to be placed upon the presence of fluid in the stomach, and not in the lungs."

† London Medical Repensitory, vol. 28, p. 542.

‡ In a late dissection of a person drowned last winter in a pond in London, where the body remained immersed during half an hour, and the examination was made the next day, the lungs were of a deep livid hue and crepitated very indistinctly. They were filled with a frothy, sanguineous fluid, and the bronchial tubes and air cells contained a quantity of mucus and water. The face, neck and chest were of a dark livid hue. Several of the internal parts were in a state of vascular engorgement. (London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 798.)

is, that the extinction of life is caused by the stoppage of respiration and the exclusion of atmospheric air from the lungs. Dr. Cullen seems to have been among the first who promulgated this, and it has been fully sanctioned by subsequent experiments.* Of these, I will only mention a striking one by Gauteron. He immersed a dog more than a quarter of an hour, without inflicting any injury, having previously inserted a long tube in the trachea, which was kept elevated during the experiment above the surface of the water.†

As to the marks of violence which may be found on the bodies of the drowned, they are with great propriety divided by Foderé into three classes.

1. Those which are totally independent of any connexion with the circumstance of drowning. Of this nature, are the usual signs of poisoning—a regularly formed ecchymosis around the neck, indicative of strangling, or wounds inflicted by fire arms, or cutting instruments. All these lesions have an essentially distinct character, which cannot be mistaken. And hence the evident importance of examining all bodies drawn from the water. It was by pursuing such an investigation, that Deveaux discovered, under the breast of a woman, a wound which had penetrated to her heart.

2. There are marks of violence which may have resulted either from accidents attending submersion, or from previous homicide, and these are unequal, irregular wounds, which do not penetrate far into the body—contusions, fractures and luxations. In all such instances, ascertain, if possible, the height from which the person has fallen, and the resistance he may have encountered.‡ The rapidity of the current and the

* See letter to Lord Cathcart, by Wm. Cullen, M. D., Edinburgh, 1784, p. 6.

† Paris, vol. 3, p. 29.

‡ “A few years ago, a man who had leaped from each of the then three bridges into the Thames with impunity, undertook to repeat the exploit for a wager. Having jumped from London bridge, he sunk, and was drowned. When the body was found, it appeared that he had gone down with the arms in the horizontal, instead of the perpendicular posture, in consequence of which, both of them were dislocated by the fall upon the water.” (Smith, p. 214.)

In another case, a soldier, an excellent swimmer, plunged headlong into the Sambre. He was seen to struggle, but it was supposed to be in jest: but perceiving him to become motionless, he was dragged out. On recovering his senses, he was found to be perfectly paralyzed from the neck downwards. Death followed in a few hours, and on dissection, the body of the fifth cervical vertebra was found fractured transversely. Case by Dr. Reveillon. *Archives Generales. Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 11, p. 240.

sharpness of the banks, may also have caused wounds. The obstacles which might have been encountered should also be noticed. Dr. Fine remarks, that the rapidity of the Rhone, and the numerous mills erected on its banks, often produce most shocking wounds on the bodies of those who are driven against the stakes in the stream, or are drawn into the machinery.*

3. Lastly, there may be lesions received after death. These are to be determined by the rules laid down in the section on medico-legal dissection. The progress of putrefaction deserves particular attention in this case.

IV. The next point proposed for consideration was, the effects of immersion on the dead body and the changes produced by it.

There is but little difference between the specific gravity of the human body, and that of water, though the former is somewhat the greater. Hence, a person, whether dead or alive, when thrown into the water, will sink, unless buoyed up by external aid; but after the process of putrefaction has occasioned the evolution of gaseous matter, the body becomes specifically lighter than the water, and it rises to the surface. It is on this principle that bodies committed to the deep have generally weights affixed to them.

It is, however, possible that a body may float at first, when its cavities have been previously filled with air. Thus Dr. Male supposes, that in the case of a person strangled and thrown into the water with the cord attached around the neck, the body might float at once, from the included air. It is also the opinion, that dead bodies will float sooner in deep than in shallow, and in fresh than in salt water.† In the disastrous accident of the Royal George, the bodies were observed to rise to the surface on or about the fifth day.‡

It often becomes a subject of much importance to ascertain *how long the body has lain in the water*. Until recently, we have had but few facts to guide the medico-legal examiner,

* Marc, p. 183.

† Male. 2d edition, p. 186. The body of Prince Carraccioli, who was hung by order of Lord Nelson, was sunk in the sea, with double headed shot weighing 250 lbs. tied to the legs. It floated on the surface in thirteen days.

‡ Paris, vol. 2, p. 41.

and his inferences could only be drawn from the general results of putrefaction.* It was, however, understood, that the body, after laying for some time under water, became partly converted into a fatty substance, termed *adipocire*, and which, in appearance, resembles spermaceti.† Water, in any situation, will produce this, although running water has been found to do it more rapidly. The question, how long a time is necessary to cause this change to take place, has been made the subject of a very interesting legal inquiry.

"At the Lent assizes held at Warwick in the year 1805, the following cause came before the court. A gentleman named Meecham, who was insolvent, left his own house with the intention (as was presumed from his recent conduct and conversation) of destroying himself. Five weeks and four days after that period, his body was found floating down a river three miles from Birmingham, the place where he resided. The face was disfigured by putrefaction, and the hair separated from the scalp by the slightest pull; but the other parts of the body were firm and white, without any putrefactive appearance. The clothes were unaltered, but the linen was exceedingly rotten. On examining the body, it was found that the lower part of the abdomen and the glutei muscles were converted into *adipocire*.

"A commission of bankruptcy having been taken out against the deceased a few days after he left home, it became an important question to the interest of his family, to ascertain whether or not he was living at that period. From the changes which the body had sustained, it was presumed that

* Mr. John Shaw relates the case of two young men, drowned in the middle of winter, whose bodies were examined by him. Though in the water only for a very short time, the surface, in the course of twenty-four hours, became black and puffed, and on raising the skin, a quantity of very offensive gas escaped. He then removed a considerable portion of the skin, and it was found that those parts from under which the gas had passed out, went much more slowly into the putrefactive state than the others. He supposes that the emphysema may have originated from the rupture of some air vessel during the last agony. If generally found, this may, as he suggests, prove a good test of life previous to submersion. (London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 43, p. 185.)

† See Dr. Gibbes' papers on *Adipocire*, in Philosophical Transactions, vol. 84, p. 169, vol. 85, p. 239. "This appearance is often to be found in the macerating tub of a dissecting room, where there is but little water, and that both stagnant and seldom changed, but the process of its formation requires a much longer time to effect than elsewhere."

he had drowned himself on the day he left home, and to corroborate this presumption, the evidence of Dr. Gibbes of Bath was requested, who, from his experiments on this subject, was better acquainted with it than any other person. He stated on the trial, that he had procured a small quantity of this fatty substance, by immersing the muscular parts of animals in water for a month, and that it requires five or six weeks to make it in any large quantity. Upon this evidence, the jury were of opinion that the deceased was not alive at the time the commission was taken out, and the bankruptcy was accordingly superseded.”*

The information to which I have alluded as explanatory of the progress of change in the bodies of the drowned, is derived from a memoir of Dr. Devergié, published in the second volume of the *Annales D’Hygiène*. It is unnecessary for me to analyze it, as that has already been done in an able manner by Dr. Beatty. I therefore copy from him.

“The observations of M. Devergié are entitled to much consideration, from the unrivalled opportunity afforded for their formation. He was authorized to carry on his investigations at the establishment called ‘*La Morgue*,’ in Paris, a building on the banks of the Seine, to which are transported all bodies found dead in the city and its environs, and where they are exposed during three days for the purpose of recognition by their friends. The number thus exhibited exceeds three hundred annually, and includes all manner of violent deaths. In case of the sudden disappearance of an individual, his friends repair to the Morgue, and leave with the porter an accurate description of his person, his clothes, and the period at which he was last seen; and when a body

* Male, 2d edition, p. 192. Professor Amos’ Lecture, in *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 8, p. 193. Dr. Harlan of Philadelphia, placed a cranium for maceration in a barrel half filled with water and closely covered over. On examination at six weeks after, he found it floating on the surface of the water, with one side above the surface, and on cutting into it, the whole substance down to the bone was converted into adipocere. On the contrary, that portion of the head and face which was immersed, was found putrid and macerated. (*North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 5, p. 471.) I neglected to mention in a previous page, that Dr. Bostock considers adipocere as the immediate production of the muscular fibre, and not as some have thought, a mere residue of the fat after the destruction of the muscles. (*Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 15, p. 534.)

is brought in, it is carefully examined, and if it corresponds with any of the descriptions that have been left, notice to that effect is sent to the persons interested, who come and claim it. The number of persons recognized is very considerable; in the first six months of the year 1829, out of 148 bodies, 116 were claimed. Of this number 62 were drowned, of whom 45 were recognized. Being thus furnished with positive information as to the time of immersion and that of finding the body, Devergié was enabled to prosecute his inquiries with great accuracy. He found that in general no change takes place on the exterior before the fourth or fifth day, and the cadaverous rigidity frequently continues two, three, or even four days after immersion. This is probably owing to the coldness of the medium in which the body is placed. About the fourth or fifth day, the skin on the palms of the hands begins to whiten, and this change of colour takes place particularly on the ball of the thumb, and the fleshy eminence on the inner side of the palm over the metacarpal bone of the little finger, together with the lateral surfaces of the fingers. The back of the hand does not partake of this colouring, and the rest of the body presents nothing particular. On the sixth or eighth day, the skin at the back of the hand begins to whiten; at the same time that the sole of the foot has acquired a similar tinge: the skin of the face is softened, and of a more faded white than the rest of the body. On the fifteenth day, the face is slightly swollen and red; a greenish spot begins to form on the skin over the middle of the sternum; the hands and feet, with the exception of the dorsum of the latter, are quite white, and the skin of the palm of the hand is wrinkled. The subcutaneous cellular tissue of the thorax is reddish, and the cortical substance of the brain takes on a green colour in the upper part of that organ. At one month, the face is reddish brown, the eyelids and lips are green and swollen, the neck is slightly green, and a spot of about six inches in diameter, brown in colour and with a green areola, occupies the superior and middle part of the sternum. The scrotum and penis are enormously distended by gas, the latter being sometimes in a state of erection from that cause.

The skin of the hands and feet is quite white and very much wrinkled, presenting the appearance of having been long enveloped in a poultice. The hair and nails are still very adherent. The lungs are emphysematous, and fill the cavity of the chest, overlapping the heart,—a condition different from that which these organs present at a more advanced period. At a month and a half, besides the appearances first mentioned, the neck and thorax are found very green, and the cuticle begins to detach itself round the base of the hand where it joins the wrist. At two months, the body is covered with slime, which penetrates through the clothes. The face is enormously swelled and of a brown colour, the lips are tumefied and separated so as to expose the teeth. The skin on the middle of the abdomen, as well as that of the arms, forearms, thighs and legs, is still in a natural state. This is a most remarkable fact, and establishes a striking difference between the progress of putrefaction in water, and when the body is exposed to the atmosphere; in the latter case the abdomen being the first part to manifest any change. At this period the skin has become detached from the hands and feet, and having the nails attached to it, forms as it were a glove. The skin and nails of the feet are longer in separating than those of the hand. The hair begins to fall off, and is easily removed by pulling. The veins are almost completely empty of blood, and commonly distended with gas. The inner surface of the arteries is red, and that of the trachea between the cartilages presents the same colour. If at the moment of death the right cavities of the heart were gorged with blood, the internal surface of the ventricle is of a jet black colour; and in contrary cases an analogous appearance is presented on the opposite side. Devergié considers this a most important diagnostic mark of death by asphyxia. At two months and a half, the green colour of the skin extends to the arms, forearms and legs; the nails are completely detached from the hands and feet; some adipocire is formed on the cheeks, chin, breasts, arm-pits and anterior part of the thighs; the abdomen is greatly swollen by putrefaction within: the muscles at this period preserve their natural

colour, and do not appear altered in texture. At three months and a half, there is observed destruction of the scalp, eyelids and nose, to such an extent as to make it difficult to tell the age of the individual. The skin of the breast is generally of a greenish brown; the centre of the abdomen is of an opaline colour, and scattered with small ulcerations caused by the water. Larger corrosions are found in different parts of the body. The hands and feet are completely naked of skin. The lungs no longer fill the thorax, but leave between them and the pleura costalis a space filled with reddish serum. At four months and a half, occurs complete destruction of the face and scalp, leaving the skull bare; the remains of the face, the neck, and anterior part of the thighs are entirely converted into adipocire; and small eminences, indicating the commencement of calcareous incrustation, are observed on the prominent parts. The brain presents traces of adipocire in its anterior part. Devergié has not classified the changes that take place at more advanced periods.”*

The knowledge and application of these facts might have proved useful in the excitement which several years since agitated our state. The body of William Morgan, drowned some fifteen months previous in the Niagara river, was supposed to have been found. The hair dropped out from the slightest touch; the nails of the fingers and toes were loose; the body was swollen, and the arms of a chocolate colour. My former pupil and friend, Dr. John Cotes, of Batavia, examined the body. The parts under the skin had not undergone decomposition; the stomach was in a perfect state, and there was nothing manifest, except the early indications of putrefaction. He deposed, before the coroner's jury, that this body has probably not lain in the water more than six or eight weeks. It was subsequently ascertained to be the body of another individual. Yet it is to be added, that there were some striking coincidences in physical marks between the murdered individual and the one now under examination.

* Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, Art. *Persons found dead*. Devergié, *Annales*, vol. 2, p. 160. Orfila has attacked Devergié very severely, in his *Examen Juridiques*, vol. 2, p. 1 to 120. The main charge however is plagiarism, and a denial in some cases of the uniform occurrence of the changes indicated. The controversy has been continued in the *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 5, p. 429; vol. 6, p. 209.

V. Spencer Cowper, Esq. a member of the English bar, and three other individuals, were tried at the Hertford Assizes, in 1699, for the murder of Mrs. Sarah Stout. Mr. Cowper came to Hertford on Monday, the 13th of March, and shortly after visited Mrs. Stout, who lived with her mother, of the same name. He dined with them, and staid till four in the afternoon. When he went away, he promised to return and lodge there that night. Accordingly, at 9 o'clock, he arrived, ate some supper, and then engaged in conversation with Mrs. Stout, the daughter. They were alone in the room, when she called a servant, and desired her to make a fire in his chamber, and to warm his bed. The direction was attended to, and in about a quarter of an hour, the servant heard the door shut, as if some one was going out. She remained above about a quarter of an hour longer, and then came down into the room. Mr. Cowper and Mrs. Stout were both gone, and the next morning she was found dead, and *floating* on the water. Its depth was about five feet, and her body was about five or six inches under it, although some of her clothes was on its surface. Her eyes were open, and some little froth issued from her mouth and nostrils. The body was not tumefied, nor were any bruises observed. This was the testimony of the individuals who took the body out of the water.

Mr. Dimsdale, a surgeon, was sent for by the mother, to view the body. He found both sides of the neck swelled and black, and the skin between her breasts up towards the collar-bone, was also dark coloured. The left wrist was slightly bruised. There was, however, no circular mark around the neck. It is to be regretted that this investigation proceeded no further.

On the 28th of April, six weeks after the death of Mrs. Stout, her body was disinterred for the purpose of inspection. The medical witnesses stated, that they found the head and neck so much putrefied, that no opinion could be formed respecting their appearance. The stomach and intestines were, however, in a sound state, as were also the lungs. Neither

of them was putrefied, and on making incisions into them, no water could be discovered.

Drs. Coatsworth, Nailor, Burnet, and Woodhouse, with Mr. Babington, a surgeon, deposed, that when a person is drowned, water will be taken into the stomach and lungs, and as none was found in this case, they were of opinion that she came to her death by some other means.

The above is an abstract of the testimony on the part of the crown. On the part of Mr. Cowper, it was first attempted to be shown, that the peculiar position of the body was owing to its laying sideways against some stakes in the river. These prevented its complete immersion under water, and a witness also mentioned, that in drawing the body out of the water, one of the arms rubbed against the stakes, and thus probably produced the injury observed on it.

Drs. Sloane, Garth, Morley, Wollaston and Crell, together with William Cowper, the celebrated anatomist, appeared as witnesses for the prisoner. They were all asked concerning the circumstance of no water being found in the body, and whether this disproved the probability of drowning. Dr. Sloane considered it altogether an accidental appearance in the stomach, and not necessarily present in such cases. The others advanced similar opinions. As to the fluid in the lungs, the answers were not very definite; but it was insinuated by some, that the six weeks' burial might have dissipated whatever was taken in.*

During the trial, it was a subject of keen inquiry, whether dead bodies float or sink when thrown into the water. Seamen were summoned to depose on this point, and they testified that weights were fastened in order to produce their descent. The explanation of Dr. Garth is, however, perfectly satisfactory on this point. It is the same which is mentioned in a former page, Weights are added to prevent the buoyancy when putrefaction commences. In answer to a question from the judge, (Baron Hatsell,) Dr. Garth remarked, that the body of a strangled person might possibly float, on ac-

* Dr. Morley suggested, that if the female intended to destroy herself, she might, by keeping her breath, only take in a very small quantity of water.

count of the included air. In this instance, however, there was no proof of such a cause of death.

Dr. Crell insisted much on the presence of the frothy mucus about the mouth and nostrils, as a proof that Mrs. Stout had been drowned.

The coroner's jury had returned a verdict of *non compos mentis*, and Mr. Cowper, on the trial, attempted to prove a previous melancholy state of mind. This, of course, was for the purpose of rendering it probable that suicide had been committed.

These were the leading medico-legal facts and opinions elicited on the trial, and the jury, after remaining out about half an hour, brought in a verdict of not guilty.*

A case resembling the above in several particulars, has happened in this state.

Levi Weeks was, on the 31st of March, 1800, put upon his trial, before the court of oyer and terminer at New-York, for the murder of Gulielma Sands. The principal circumstances were as follows: The deceased and the prisoner lodged in the house of Mr. Ring, who was a distant relative of the former. She received attentions from the prisoner, and told Mrs. Ring that she was to be married to him on Sunday, the 22d of December, 1799. When the evening arrived, she dressed herself, and came down into the lower room, where the prisoner was. Shortly after, she again went up stairs, whither Mrs. Ring followed her, saw her put on her hat and shawl, and take her muff in her hand. While in this state of preparation, Mrs. Ring came down stairs into the room, and found her husband and Levi sitting together. The latter instantly took his hat

* Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 5, p. 193 to 231. This case gave rise to several bitter pamphlets, in which the whole course of testimony was reviewed, and the characters of Mrs. Stout and Mr. Cowper were treated with little mercy. (See vol. 8, p. 485 to 512.) The opponent of Mr. Cowper accuses him or his accomplices in broad terms, of having felled her with a blow under the ear, and then strangling her with his hand. Such an opinion is, however, hardly tenable, as Dimsdale and Camlin both stated, that the stagnation of blood which was present, did not materially differ from what is usually observed in the drowned. (The following additional facts I derive from the London Law Magazine, vol. 10, Life of Lord Cowper. Spencer Cowper was the brother of Lord Chancellor Cowper, and in after life became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. Miss Stout appears to have been in love with him, although a married man. Her mother procured an appeal of murder against him, but it was got rid of by connivance.)

and went out into the entry, and the moment the door opened, Mr. Ring heard a walking on the stairs, and directly a whispering at the door. She soon heard them walking along, and presently the front door opened, and the latch fell. The time she accurately fixed at about ten minutes after eight. Weeks returned to his lodgings at Ring's at ten o'clock. Gulielma's body was found in the Manhattan well, on the 2d of January, 1800.

As to the circumstantial evidence, I will only add the following. It was proved by a witness, that Weeks had spent the evening with him from half past eight until ten: and again it was testified, that it took fifteen minutes to walk from Ring's to the well.

The medico-legal testimony was of the following import. The body was carefully drawn up, so as not to touch either side of the well. Her hat, handkerchief and shoes were gone, and her clothes torn. On the right hand there was something like a bruise, and there were scratches of sand upon her skin, some of which was knocked off, and seemed to have been driven forward. The right foot was bare, and somewhat scratched on its upper part, as if she had been dragged on the ground. Her countenance was flushed, and her arms and neck very limber. Drs. Prince and Mackintosh examined the body before the coroner's jury, on the 3d January. It was ascertained that she was not pregnant. The scarf-skin of the face was scratched, as if with gravel, and there was a bruise on the knee. There was a livid spot on the breast, but none on the neck. In the body, a small quantity of water was discovered. Both these gentlemen deposed, that in their opinion, all the appearances could be accounted for on the supposition of her having been drowned.

Dr. Hosack saw the body on the day it was interred. He was struck with the unusual redness of the countenance, and upon looking at the neck, observed three or four dark-coloured spots, of an irregular shape, but not in an exact line. The largest were about an inch and a half, and the smallest about three quarters of an inch. He was decidedly of opinion that these were marks of violence done to the neck, and did not

conceive it possible that they could have been committed on one's own person. Other witnesses had also observed these spots on the neck.

Towards the conclusion of the trial, Dr. Hosack was again called, and asked whether there was any explanation by which the medical testimony, apparently so discordant, could be reconciled. He replied, that it might, in either of two ways. First, the spots were probably not so visible, when the body was first taken out of the water, as after it had been exposed to the air for some days. The gradual progress of putrefaction might have developed this appearance in the injured part. Secondly, when she was first taken out of the well, it was generally supposed that the neck and collar bone were broken. As Dr. H. did not see her until the day of interment, it is possible that the frequent turning and bending of the head, and the repeated examinations of the neck, to ascertain the injury done to the collar bone, might have produced the spots in question, and as the body had been dead for several days, a little violence might have produced a rupture of the cutaneous vessels, and a consequent effusion under the skin.

The prisoner was acquitted.*

I cannot avoid venturing a single remark on this case. The prisoner was doubtless innocent, but there are strong proofs to my mind, that the deceased suffered violence, previous to falling or being thrown into the well. The weather was undoubtedly cold, (it was during the holidays,) and the progress of putrefaction during immersion, must unquestionably have been very slow. The coroner's jury viewed the body on the day after it was drawn up. Dr. Hosack, and other witnesses, sometime thereafter. Is it not probable that exposure to the air developed these marks of injury, and do not these marks indicate manual strangulation previous to immersion?†

* Report of the trial of Levi Weeks, &c. taken in short hand by the clerk of the court, (Wm. Coleman, Esq.) 8vo. New-York, 1800. Not long since, it was asserted in some of our newspapers, but I know not on what authority, that the actual murderer of Miss Sands had suffered death for a similar crime in another country.

† In the Causes Celebres, par Mejan, vol. 5, p. 127, a case is related, of an individual taken from the water, around whose body a bag containing several large stones was suspended. Distinct marks of compression were observed on the neck, and on dissecting through the skin, blood was found effused in situations corresponding to the external ecchymosis. One of the cervical vertebræ was luxated. The accusa-

There is a second question belonging to this subject, which is no less intricate than the first. *Was the drowning the effect of suicide, accident, or homicide?* I can offer but few observations on it.

We should inquire particularly as to the situation in which the body is found—notice whether the stream is rapid or still water, and whether its banks are precipitous or sliding. Ascertain whether the individual has laboured under near-sightedness, vertigo, or symptoms of insanity. The bruises on the body should be examined, and a minute dissection be made. We should, however, recollect, that the person may have precipitated himself into the water, and struck against a stone or other hard substance, and the body may have thus been wounded.* In other cases, accidental circumstances may clear up the subject, as the marks of footsteps on the margin of the water, and substances found grasped in the hands of the deceased, that have evidently been seized while making resistance.†

It is an opinion with some writers, that less water is found

tion was, that he had been strangled previous to the immersion; while the defence set up, rested on various proofs of previous insanity, and it was insinuated that the luxation might have originated from the fall into the well. The jury (November 19, 1808,) acquitted the *persons accused*. A similar case, where an extensive and severe fracture of the cranium was found on the head of a female drawn from a well in a cellar, containing five feet of water, and being about the same to the surface, will be found in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 9, p. 192. The sides of the well were smooth, and its aperture small.

I add the following curious extract from Hamilton's *History of Medicine*, as given in a review of that work, in the *Lancet*, N. S., vol. 8, p. 486.

"Among other instances of superior sagacity to which the Chinese pretend, one of the most singular, perhaps, is the method by which they affect to discover whether a man found dead by strangulation has been his own executioner, or has been strangled by others! whether, in case of a body being found in the water, death preceded or followed its immersion, and whether, in other cases, death has been the result of natural causes or of felonious violence.—The body being taken up in all suspicious cases, is carefully washed with vinegar; a large fire is next kindled in a pit dug expressly for the purpose, and measuring six feet in length, three in width, and as much in depth; the fire in this pit is progressively augmented, till the surrounding earth becomes intensely heated, when the fire is removed, a large quantity of a vinous liquor, fermented from rice and honey, is poured in, and the mouth of the pit covered with an osier hurdle, upon which the body is stretched out at full length. A cloth, supported in the form of an arch, is then thrown over both, in order to confine the vapour arising from the vinous liquor thrown into the heated pit, and direct its action to every part of the body. At the end of two hours, the cloth is removed, and the body minutely inspected, when, if any blows have been inflicted, their marks will appear distinctly upon the body."

* Male, p. 236.

† See the case of Mr. Taylor, already noticed at page 5 of this volume.

in the lungs of suicides than in those who are drowned by accident, or wilfully; but this is evidently uncertain and unfounded.

In March, 1806, a young woman at Little Sheffield, in Yorkshire, made way with herself, by breaking a hole in the ice upon a pond, and thrusting her head in, while the rest of the body remained out. This situation repelled the idea either of force or of accident.*

In 1776, a young man named Paulet, of a violent and gloomy temper, was found dead at the bottom of a well. Strong suspicions attached to two individuals. The medical reporters stated that they found sand under the nails of his hands; a circular mark on his ankle bones, external contusions on the head, and particularly above the left superciliary ridge, and some cuts on the top of the scalp. On opening the thorax, the whole extent of the trachea down to the lungs was found filled with frothy mucus, and the stomach was half full of a whitish water. They considered these as marks of death by drowning. It was proved that the well was so surrounded by houses, that the slightest noise at it would have been immediately heard, and it was also constructed with sharp and heavy stones. The marks on the ankle-bones were alone of a doubtful nature, but as Paulet had been melancholy, and refused sustenance for several days, and every other circumstance could be satisfactorily explained, the parliament of Toulouse liberated the accused, and agreed that suicide had been committed.†

One would imagine, says Dr. Smith, that if a person be taken out of the water tied hand and foot, there need be no hesitation about inferring that he had been forced into that situation; yet we have several cases of precisely that description, in which the presumption was clearly in favour of suicide.

In June 1816, the body of a gauging instrument-maker who had been missing for some days from his home, was discovered floating down the Thames. On being taken out, his wrists were found tied together and made fast to his knees, which

* Smith, p. 275.

† Foderé, vol. 3, p. 127, from the *Causes Célèbres*.

were in like manner secured to each other. He had been in a state of mental derangement for two years. The cord with which he had tied himself, was recognized as one that had hung from the ceiling over his bed, and by which he used to raise himself up, as he had been confined to bed for some weeks. He was a good swimmer, and it was presumed he had taken the precaution to prevent himself from employing that power. The verdict in this case was, "found drowned."*

In another instance, a man aged twenty-eight, with a wife and children, was reduced to great distress. On a certain day, he took an affectionate leave of his family, declaring that he would not return until he had obtained some employment, by which he should be able to procure them bread. The following day, his body was taken out of the New River, with his hands and legs tied. A card with his address was found in his pocket, and also three pence; when he left home, he had five pence, and it was supposed that he had purchased the cord with the deficient sum. The verdict in this case was, "insanity."†

In 1817, says Foderé, I was called to see the body of a workman, large, strong, and in the flower of his age, who had been taken out of the Yll. His hands and fingers were tied together with silk ribbon, in numerous folds. The hands evidently could have been very easily engaged. There were no marks of external injury, and no swelling around the ligatures. His dress was uninjured, and nothing was taken from him. On examination, there were no marks except those common to drowning. Our author gave it as his opinion that this was a case of suicide, and that he had probably tied the ribbon with his teeth.‡

* Smith, p. 276.

† Paris, vol. 3, p. 42.

‡ Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, vol. 24, Art. *Indices*. A similar case is related in the Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 9, p. 207. The body of the Sieur X. was taken from the Seine at Paris, having the feet, wrists and neck tied. None of the knots, however, were tight, and they left but a very slight impression on the skin. On dissection, the liver and heart were found to bear the marks of long continued disease. The medical examiners, (Marc, Guichard, &c.) from these circumstances, and the total absence of injury, gave the opinion that this was a case of suicide. They add, that in each case they were slip knots, and apparently made by the individual to put it out of his power to help himself in the water.

The above are examples where there may be doubt as to suicide or homicide. I will conclude with one, where the question was suicide or accident. It arose in the English court of exchequer in 1826.

An individual named Rainer, had insured his life for £3000 in the Rock Life Insurance. Now it is one of the provisos in a policy, that if the insured meets his death by suicide or duelling, the insurance shall be void. Mr. Rainer, the person insured, had been insane for some time. He resided at Highbury, and on the 15th of March, between five and six o'clock, left his home without the knowledge of his family, and called at several places, exhibiting strong symptoms of agitation and excitement. He then took the road to Finchley, and on reaching a pond on the premises of a farmer, was drowned. It is probable, from the state in which his shoes and stockings were found, that he had walked into the pond with his clothes on; that he had then returned, undressed himself, laid his clothes in a convenient place, and in such a manner as to indicate that he intended to dress himself after leaving the water.

It was urged, that if this was a case of suicide, he would have thrown himself into the water with his clothes on; and some medical witnesses were of opinion that he died from apoplexy, occasioned by immersion in cold water while under a high fever. The Chief Baron remarked to the jury, that this was a case in which there was a great want of facts, and that they could only decide on probabilities. The verdict was in favour of the executors.*

It is not necessary to state the laws of various countries against the crime of murder. Whatever may be the mode adopted to destroy life, it is universally visited with the highest punishment. In a recent English law called Lord Lansdowne's act, (9 Geo. IV. chap. 31,) the *attempt to drown, suffocate or strangle a person*, is declared a felony, and made punishable with death.

* Garret and others, executors of Rainer, v. the Rock Insurance Company. I copy this case from a newspaper.

CHAPTER XV.

WOUNDS ON THE LIVING BODY.

1. Of wounds in general—division of them into slight, dangerous and mortal—enumeration of each. Circumstances which may aggravate the danger of wounds. A. The age and constitution of the patient, and his maladies, either hereditary or accidental. Habits of intemperance. Supervention of diseases, and how they are to be estimated—erysipelas—tetanus. B. The passions of the patient—negligence or delay. C. Insalubrity of the atmosphere. D. Ignorance or negligence of the surgeon.
2. Nature and prognostics of wounds of particular parts. Wounds of the head—of the face—of the neck—of the thorax—of the abdomen—of the extremities. Wounds from fire-arms. Laws as to the time within which death from wounds is deemed murder.
3. Of mutilation. French laws against it—English—Coventry Act—Cases. American laws.

It has been already stated, but it is proper to repeat in this place, that the term **WOUND**, in legal medicine, comprehends all lesions of the body, and in this it differs from the meaning of the word when used in surgery. The latter only refers to a solution of continuity, while the former comprises not only these, but also every other kind of accident, such as bruises, contusions, fractures, dislocations, &c. &c. In this sense then the term is to be understood in our future remarks.*

The questions which arise in all cases of wounds that come under judicial investigation, are the following: How far has the person who caused the injury, contributed to the death of the deceased, or to the lesion of one or other of the functions of the body? And again, to what class is a certain wound to be referred? These are inquiries of great magnitude—and correct views, as well as stable principles, are needed, in or-

* Ballard and Marc, however, object to this, and recommend the word **LESION**, for the general term. *Lesion from some external cause.* (Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, art. *Blessures.*) In *Moriarty v. Brooks*, Lord Lyndhurst, Chief Baron, said—“The definition of a wound, in criminal cases, is an injury to the person, by which the skin is broken. If the skin is broken and there was a bleeding, that is a wound.” (6 Carrington and Payne’s Reports, p. 684.) This is the usual surgical definition; but a man may have a bone fractured from a blow, without any breaking of the skin.

der to answer them properly. Medical and surgical works are filled with instances of remarkable recoveries from the most dreadful wounds, and also with cases of death from apparently the slightest ones. If we take these as our guide, the consequence will be, that nothing of a determinate nature can be agreed upon, and every physician, whenever he enters a court of justice, may, by the aid of a corresponding example, prove that a dangerous wound is not so, and that its fatality has been owing to ignorance or neglect. Such power is too extensive and too important to be granted to every medical witness, and whatever we take from his hands, and refer to sound principles and general rules, is a solid gain to the cause of truth and justice.

In further proceeding with my observations, I shall, in the first place, notice the subject of wounds in general, and afterwards examine the nature and prognostics of wounds of particular parts. The subject of mutilation, from its entering so much into our statute law, will form a third section.

1. *Of wounds in general.*

Wounds, from their nature, may be either *slight, dangerous or mortal*. By a slight wound, is meant one in which there are no parts injured that are important to carrying on life, or any of its functions, and whose uniform course is to heal quickly, and to leave no lesion or deformity. A dangerous one, implies a wound which, without being mortal, is still not exempt from danger, and presents more or less difficulty in its cure. Lastly, mortal wounds comprehend those whose consequence and effect is death. In this sense only is a wound in legal medicine termed mortal. More minute divisions than these which I have named, may, however, be made, and indeed are indispensable. Thus, a wound may be in itself mortal, or it may be mortal by accident. It may be in itself dangerous, or it may become so from some complication, or from not having been properly treated. Even slight wounds may become dangerous from neglect, from a debilitated or diseased state of the system, or from mal-treatment, such as endeavouring to excite suppuration, when the aim ought to be to

promote adhesion. In such cases, the blame should be laid where it properly belongs.

Circumstances as well as accident have a considerable effect on wounds. Bohn suggests several instances of this nature, in which their mortality is prevented by particular phenomena. Thus, a small portion of the omentum, or the fat of the intestine, may so place itself in the mouth of a wounded bloodvessel in the abdomen, as to prevent a hæmorrhage, while, if not thus obstructed, it would be mortal.* Again, it has been repeatedly observed by surgeons, that there may be such an adhesion of the pleura to the lungs, as that the blood or pus from the latter, will flow outwardly, when they have been injured by a penetrating wound. The same author remarks, that it has never been demonstrated, and indeed in the nature of things it never can be proved, that a wound from which there is a recovery, is precisely similar to one which has proved fatal, although externally they may be similar in every respect. In the one case, there can be no dissection to prove its nature, and in the other, there may have been many peculiar circumstances not attendant on the former.† This observation is in itself a sufficient answer to the argument already referred to, of proving the possibility of recovery from dangerous wounds, by a reference to similar instances.

The subject may be farther illustrated by examples. A man, says Bohn, receives a wound in the bottom of his stomach, a severe hiccup, faintings and retchings come on, while the half digested food that he has taken, passes out through the aperture. This individual is, however, cured in a month's time, whilst another, whose wound is accompanied with similar symptoms, except that he does not hiccup, and which in itself is a favourable symptom, dies in three days. Shall we say that the latter was not mortally wounded, because the former escaped? Dissection will teach us the incorrectness of this deduction, and that in the instance of mortality, the wound has been rather lateral than deep, and has touched the left gastric artery, in consequence of which, there has been a pro-

* Bohn, p. 31. He mentions a dissection, in which the right iliac artery was found wounded, and life had been prolonged for thirteen days, evidently from this cause.

† Bohn, p. 27. "Dubium an vulnus sanatum exacte idem cum non sanato fuerit."

fuse hæmorrhage into the abdominal cavity. Again, an individual receives a violent blow on the head, which causes a depression of the cranium, and is accompanied with a considerable hæmorrhage from the head and ear, and a loss of sense and motion. After a day or two, the depressed piece of bone is raised, he recovers his senses, the hæmorrhage ceases, and at the end of some weeks, the patient recovers. Another is injured in precisely the same manner, is treated similarly, and notwithstanding, dies at the end of seven days, without ever recovering from the state of coma, and on dissection, extravasated blood is found in the ventricles of the brain.*

These instances are sufficient to prove how little dependence is to be placed on analogy, and they also illustrate the importance of fixed rules concerning the mortality of wounds, founded exclusively on anatomical and physiological data.

A strict definition of life is not necessary at this time, and it is sufficient to state, that it depends on the union and reciprocal influence of the functions which compose it, and particularly of the circulating, nervous and respiratory systems. Lesions of the chylopoetic system come next in order, as the body cannot survive without nourishment, and the danger to life will of course be in proportion to the extent of the injury, and the immediate necessity of the organ. Wounds which rupture the large bloodvessels in one or other of the large cavities, such as the head, the thorax, or the abdomen; those which penetrate the auricles or ventricles of the heart, the trunk of the aorta, or vena cava, are *mortal*. There are, however, so many cases on record, in which individuals are stated to have survived for some time, with large abscesses in the brain, or even a ball in that part, that we are justified in viewing wounds of the heart more fatal than those of the head. Next to these are wounds, which, from their depth, penetrate into the spinal marrow—wounds of the head, complicated with such severe injury, that venesection and the trephine do not alleviate them—a division or twisting of the spinal marrow in the cervical vertebræ—a division of the eighth pair of nerves—and a general affection of the nervous system

* Bohn, p. 28, 29.

from blows or injuries on parts, which are the centre of its various departments, such as the pit of the stomach. In the next place, may be mentioned as mortal wounds, such as prevent the function of respiration—a total division, or a large wound of the trachea; and particularly, if in the latter case, the underlip of the wound is retracted inwards—wounds penetrating through the bronchiæ, and wounds of the diaphragm, particularly of its tendinous portion. To this class belong also extensive wounds of the pharynx, œsophagus, and stomach—of the duodenum, thoracic duct, and mesentery, and particularly, if a large number of the lacteals be divided, together with severe wounds of the liver, spleen, pancreas, gall-bladder, and the ductus cysticus, and choledicus. Wounds of the urinary passages, kidneys, ureters, bladder, impregnated uterus and amputation of the male genital organs, are all ordinarily mortal, unless immediate aid be afforded, as are also extensive and penetrating ones from fire arms accompanied with fracture of bones.

All these accidents, from the importance of the organs that are injured—the extravasations that occur, or the hæmorrhage which accompanies them, and which it is often impossible to check, are usually mortal. Such, however, are the powers of nature, and so extensive are its resources, that hope should seldom be abandoned. If called upon to make an immediate report, it is proper to form a prognostic on these principles, and to mention the danger that is present. On the trial, however, the conviction must be decidedly stated, that the wound was a mortal one, and that no surgical aid could have saved the patient, or when applied, had no beneficial effect.

Among *dangerous wounds*, or those concerning which we cannot give a decided prognostic, must be ranked such as are inflicted on organs essential to the exercise of the vital, natural, or animal functions; and as to their consequences, they may be divided into those which may become mortal, and those which may interrupt the exercise of any function. To the first class belong all penetrating wounds, though unaccompanied with symptoms that indicate immediate danger—all contused wounds, whether on the head, thorax or abdomen

—all wounds of the extremities, and particularly where surgical aid cannot be procured in time to suppress hæmorrhage, and all compound fractures and luxations, particularly if the part be much surrounded by nerves and muscles, and if it be near a joint. Even simple contusions or blows may become dangerous, from a rapid disorganization of parts, and a consequent mortification; and especially, if, on tendinous or ligamentous parts, the supervention of tetanic affections are to be dreaded.

In the second class are included all wounds made in any of the secretory organs and their ducts—in the organs of sense, as the eye, ear, nose, and mouth—in the generative organs, as the testicles, penis, and unimpregnated uterus. Also, fractures of the clavicle or sternum, and depression of the xiphoid or ensiform cartilage—transverse wounds of the great pectoral or dorsal muscles—and wounds of the muscles of the abdomen, particularly near the linea alba, and pubis—wounds of the perineum combined with injury to the canal of the urethra, pricking of the tendons of muscles, together with wounds of important branches of nerves.

Slight wounds comprehend those injuries in which the skin and the muscles are divided, the latter in the direction of their fibres, and where no tendon, aponeurosis, large nerves, or bloodvessels are touched, and the system has not received a severe shock. To this class, also belong simple luxations and fractures.

But, as we have already observed, there are circumstances which render this division an arbitrary one, and which cause a mortal wound of the lowest class to be inevitably mortal—a dangerous one to become mortal—and a slight one, dangerous. These circumstances may be reduced into four classes, each of which deserve particular notice.

1. The constitution and age of the patient, and his antecedent or coexistent maladies may exercise a baleful influence on the injury received. Thus, for example, there may be a complete transposition of parts—the heart is sometimes found on the right side of the thorax—the spleen has been discovered to occupy the place of the liver—the stomach has descend-

ed as low or even lower than the umbilical region, while the bladder has risen into the abdomen. It would certainly be unjust, except in cases of premeditated murder, to consider the criminal as responsible for the fatality of wounds given under such circumstances. Again, an individual may be suffering under hernia, and in that situation, may receive a mortal wound from a cutting instrument, or may die from a contusion or blow on the part, which under other circumstances would not prove dangerous.* The condition of the wounded person may also be rendered hazardous from a variation in the ordinary distribution of bloodvessels—from the presence of aneurism†—from an extreme thinness of the bones of the cranium,‡ or a venereal caries of the same part—from having large umbilical vessels, or finally, from being afflicted with some chronic disease, or suffering under debility. Slight wounds may also be rendered dangerous, and even mortal,

* Bohn, p. 70, 71.

† Two men, long at enmity, met in a public and much frequented place. The one alighting from his horse, passed to the place where his adversary stood, addressed some contemptuous words to him, and gave him a blow on the shoulder with a riding whip that he held in his hand. The other furiously ran after him, but before he had gone a dozen paces, fell down dead. There were no external marks of injury, but on dissection, an aneurism, for which he had frequently consulted the physician, was found to have burst. (Chaussier, p. 11.)

‡ A remarkable case of this description is stated in a late journal. A respectable individual put an end to his existence by hanging himself. Dr. Wesener was directed by the proper officers to examine the body. The examination of the thorax and abdomen presented nothing beyond what is usually observed in such cases, but on opening the head, he found the following deviation from nature. About the middle of the sagittal suture, the bones of the cranium were, for the space of a sixpence, as thin as the most delicate lamella of bone, and in this spot were two openings, each about the size of a pin's head, through which two vessels ran, which arose from the superficial veins of the dura mater, and anastomosed with the veins of the scalp. On cutting into the scalp, though with great care, the blood flowed over the galea aponeurotica in such quantities as quite to redden it, and it appeared on examination, that the emissaria santorini were cut through. It is evident from this statement, that a blow on the spot in question would probably have caused death, either by direct depression, or by causing internal hæmorrhage. (Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 2, p. 105, from Hufeland's Journal.)

Another case equally striking, is quoted from Frank, of a man wounded with a sabre on the frontal bone, an inch and a half from the sagittal suture, where it is obliterated in the adult. A portion of the external table of the skull was removed, and after being neglected for some days, the patient applied to Frank. He saw symptoms that induced him to apply the trephine in the neighbourhood of the wound. As soon as he reached the diploe, a torrent of blood issued forth, and the patient died the same day of the hæmorrhage. On dissection, seven vascular communications were found between the dura mater and diploe, through so many foramina in the internal table of the skull in this place. (Notice of Robert on the Influence of Anatomical Varieties on Surgical Operations, in *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 13, p. 299.)

from an extreme irritability of the nervous system, from previous habits of drunkenness, or from a scorbutic, cancerous, cachectic or venereal habit. And above all, is there serious apprehension, when these are inflicted on persons of a hæmorrhagic disposition. Cases of this description are by no means uncommon, and the slightest abrasion in them, will often cause alarming discharges.* All the possible circumstan-

* Metzger (p. 327) mentions a case of death produced in this way by a scratch of the thumb nail. Several relatives had previously died in a similar manner.

The following are references to American cases of this description:

New-York Medical Repository, vol. 6, p. 1. An account of this hæmorrhagic disposition occurring in several families, by Dr. John C. Otto, of Philadelphia. The males alone were subject to it, though females were capable of transmitting it to their male children. These families resided in New-Hampshire, and Dr. Otto adds, that Dr. Rush informed him that he had, during the course of his practice, been twice consulted in similar cases, in the state of Pennsylvania. Another instance had been communicated to Dr. R. by Mr. Boardley, of a family in Maryland, where also the males alone suffered; and additional particulars concerning this, are given in **Coxe's Medical Museum**, vol. 1, p. 236.

Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 1, p. 234. Case by Dr. E. H. Smith, in a boy, fatal at four years of age.

New-England Journal of Medicine and Surgery, vol. 2, p. 221. Cases by Dr. Hay, of Reading, (Massachusetts.) The hæmorrhagic disposition appears to have been in this family for upwards of an hundred years. The males alone were subject to it, but in some cases, the sons escaped, while the grandsons suffered severely, and some died prematurely.

American Medical Review, vol. 1, p. 278. Case by Dr. Gideon Humphrey, of a family in Pennsylvania.

Transactions of the Physico-Medical Society of New-York, vol. 1, p. 305. Case by Drs. William and Samuel Buel. All the sons of a family were affected; the sons of one daughter, and her male grand-children—but not the female.

North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 37. Case by Dr. Reynell Coates, of a young gentleman in Pennsylvania, of the family mentioned by Dr. Humphrey. Dr. Coates notices several of the American cases in this paper.

Maryland Medical Recorder, vol. 2, p. 263. Case by Dr. Jameson.

Transylvania Journal, vol. 4, p. 518, and vol. 5, p. 133. Two cases by Dr. Hughes, of Kentucky.

Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 8, p. 219, by Dr. Woodward, of Quincy.

I have also a manuscript case communicated to me by Dr. Curtis, a graduate of the Western Medical College, and which formed the subject of his inaugural dissertation. It occurred in the practice of Dr. Sprague, of Otsego county, (New-York.) Several sons and a grandson were successively affected with copious hæmorrhages from the slightest injuries. Shortly after birth, in each of them, purple spots appeared on various parts of the body. The discharge in several instances yielded readily to the operation of saline cathartics.

Of recent foreign cases, I have noted the following:

Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 8, p. 224, by Mr. Blagden.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 25, p. 291, by Mr. Davis, Surgeon, near Bristol. A family in which none of the males reached manhood—the females escaped.

Ibid. vol. 25, p. 454, (from Hufeland's Journal.) Cases by Dr. Elsaesser, near Stuttgart, and Dr. Krimer, of a similar character.

Ibid. vol. 26, p. 33, by Mr. Murray, of Alford.

ces now enumerated, should be kept in view, and particularly when wounds have been involuntary, or belong to what is termed in law, manslaughter.

But it may happen, that while the patient is suffering under a wound, he is attacked with disease and dies, and the question then arises, whether this fatality is owing to the wound, or the disease. In some instances, the solution is easy, but in others, it is attended with considerable difficulty. Thus, for example, a fever attended with comatose symptoms may supervene on a wound of the head, and pleurisy may follow a wound of the thorax. The probability evidently in such instances, is, that the injury has produced the disease; but there is notwithstanding, sufficient latitude left for doubt, and circumstances may arise, which will prevent us from assigning the wound as the cause of death. On the other hand, should gangrene, buboes, petechiæ, or the other symptoms of malignant fevers appear on a wounded person, in a hospital, or during the warm season of the year, or during the prevalence of such an epidemic, it would certainly seem that the cause of death is distinct from the danger of the wound. A similar observation will apply when an inflammatory or typhus fever supervenes on slight wounds, and renders them fatal.*

The following instance, in which Zacchias was consulted,

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 32, p. 439, (from Rust's Magazine,) by Dr. Steinmetz; the males of three generations.

Ibid. vol. 36, p. 217, by Dr. Riecken, of a family at Birkenfeld, in Oldenburg.

Lancet, N. S. vol. 13, p. 132. Cases quoted by Mr. Wardrop.

American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 3, p. 196, and vol. 5, p. 202, (from a German Journal,) by Dr. Schreyer, of Vogtsberg. The male children alone affected; and of these, three only out of five. The residue remaining perfectly healthy.

North-American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 9, p. 123, (from the Proceedings of the Medical Society of Copenhagen.) A case by Dr. Thal.

Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 25, p. 232.

* Bohn, p. 33. This author divides the symptoms into three classes.

"Alia ex vulnere ipso, ut tali, hanc à parte læsa immediate emergant; alia aliam extra vulnus causam agnoscant; alia indifferenter se habeant, id est, modo à vulnere, modo aliunde eveniant: probe omnes ac singulæ ponderandæ sunt in vulnerato circumstantiæ, et ex harum demum collatione, cujus generis sint illa individui presentis, prudenter inferendum."

In the Commonwealth v. Green, (Ashmead's Reports in First Judicial District, Pennsylvania, vol. 1, p. 289,) the doctrine is distinctly laid down, that when a wound not mortal in itself, from want of proper applications, or neglect, turns into gangrene or fever, and the patient dies, the person inflicting it is to be deemed guilty of murder, if the testimony required in addition shall warrant it.

will illustrate the difficulty that may occur. During a period when the plague raged at Rome, one Ansovini received, in a quarrel, a wound on the head, which denuded the bone, but left no fracture. He withdrew by the assistance of two friends, one of whom continued to visit him, but died in four days thereafter of the plague. The wound appeared favorable for the first three days, but at the termination of that period, a fever came on, accompanied with headach, bilious vomiting, and violent inflammation of the wounded part. On the fourth, the wound was gangrenous, and petechiæ and buboes occurred; and on the sixth day, death followed. The person who inflicted the wound, was arrested by the minister of justice, on the ground that it was the cause of death, or at least it predisposed the individual to the attack of the plague. Zacchias was consulted by the friends of the accused, and he decided that the wound had not been the cause of death, because there were no symptoms immediately after its infliction, that indicated a mortal injury to the head—that the appearances which supervened, were too rapid in their progress to appertain to it, and evidently belonged to the plague, and it was also manifest, he had taken this disease from the friend who visited him. Finally, two diseases were present in the individual, and the ordinary course of one is fatal, while that of the other is to proceed to a favourable termination. It is certainly proper to assign the former as the cause of death.*

In cases brought before courts of justice, it is however to be recollected, that they are far from being as easy of solution as the one just quoted. They are generally of intemperate persons who have engaged in brawls, receive injuries, and after an uncertain period, die; and the question arises, whether the habits of drunkenness or the blow has caused the loss of life. As a general rule, I would always lean towards the accused, unless the proof of malice is conclusive. The habitual use of spirituous liquors is so apt to produce a diseased state of the system generally, that with the above exception, we shall best promote the ends of justice by considering the offence as a secondary one.

* Zacchias' Consilium, No. 74.

Discussions on this subject, however, are so frequent, that it can hardly be dismissed with these remarks; and I will therefore, in addition to what has been said in a previous chapter, detail some cases, as illustrative of the testimony and inferences proper on such occasions.

An intemperate individual in Philadelphia, died thirty-eight hours after an affray. He walked and spoke after it, and even drank part of a pint of spirits, but was shortly after seized with insensibility, dilated pupils, oppressed breathing, and died without any return of sense. The bone and the brain beneath the injured part were examined and found natural. The mucous membrane of the cardia and the upper part of the stomach was greatly inflamed; the other parts were not diseased. Before the court, Drs. Hartshorne and Klapp, gave it as their opinion, that the injury to the head had not been the cause of death, and that there was no appearance of a blow on or near the region of the stomach. The accused was accordingly acquitted.*

Mr. Shaw mentions the following instructive case in his *Manual of Anatomy*.

An industrious man returning home from his work, found his house empty of every thing, his bed and the tools of his trade sold for gin by his wife, whom he found in the gin shop, drinking and dancing. He brought her home, and in the passage of his house struck her and ordered her to go up stairs. She refused; he carried her upon his shoulders, and the contention continuing up stairs, he struck her again. There having been no one present, we have only the husband's account of her death. He said, that while sitting on her chair she fell down, upon which he threw her on the bed, conceiving she was in a fit, such as he had seen her in formerly. Some of her neighbors coming in, found her dead.

Sir Charles Bell examined the body, and on the trial, gave the following deposition.

* This case is given by Dr. Klapp, in *American Medical Recorder*, vol. 1, p. 156. A similar state of the stomach is found in cases of apoplexy, as shown by Professor Warren in his dissections. *New-England Journal*, vol. 1, p. 34. And it is possible that it may also follow from blows on the head; but in the present instance, after the dissection, there can be hardly a doubt that it should be ascribed to the first, rather than to the last.

There was nothing remarkable in the abdomen and thorax, farther than that the stomach contained a quantity of gin, and that there was a blush of redness on the lower orifice of the stomach and duodenum. On the head, there were several bruises, but the bone was not at all hurt, and no extravasation appeared under it. The vessels of the pia mater were empty of blood, as if from pressure. There was a serous effusion under the arachnoid, and in the cavity of the brain, similar to what has been found in those who die of intoxication. On the surface of the brain, there was what appeared to be spots of extravasated blood, but upon tracing them towards the base, they appeared to be streams of blood which had flowed from a vessel ruptured in the base of the brain, and the base was covered with coagulated blood, in which also all the roots of the nerves were involved. The blood had penetrated into the ventricle, by perforating its floor. And on removing the brain and tracing the vessels, the anterior artery of the cerebrum, going off from the internal carotid of the left side, was found half torn across, and from this the extravasated blood had come.

Now this rupture had been the cause of death, and as to the cause of the rupture, "Mr. Bell's opinion coincided with the best authorities in pathology, that there is a state of the vessels, in which an external injury or shock is more apt to produce rupture; and drunkenness may be supposed to be the artificial state of excitement which most resembles this state of the vessels. Being asked whether the blows were the cause of the rupture, he said, he conceived it very likely that a shock would rupture the vessel; and being then asked, whether he conceived that this woman was more likely to have a vessel ruptured, from having been intoxicated? he was of opinion, that intoxication and the struggle were likely to produce such a degree of activity of the circulation in the head, that a less violent blow might produce rupture, than what, in other circumstances, might have proved fatal." The man was acquitted.*

* Manual of Anatomy, vol. 1, p. 46. Mr. Shaw adds, that a case similar in many respects, occurred some time previous, but the man was condemned upon clear evidence of his intention to commit murder. A parallel case to the one in the text is

Again, there are certain diseases which frequently accompany wounds, yet also arise independently, and which may thus cause matter of doubt. Of these, I will only specify erysipelas and tetanus.

"Erysipelas (says Sir Astley Cooper) often succeeds the most trifling injury of the scalp, and like carbuncle, when it occurs in this situation, generally destroys life. *Whatever renders the body irritable, predisposes to it.* The slightest causes produce it after operations at certain seasons and in particular states of the constitution, for it has often happened, that the stimulating effects of adhesive plaster have produced this disease, and have led to the death of the patient."*

Taking these as undisputed facts, what should be the testimony of the physician in cases where it supervenes on blows or wounds?

In 1823, a prostitute at Edinburgh entered the house of a female brothel keeper in a state of drunkenness, and after various irregularities, inflicted on her, with a heavy smoothing iron, a denuding wound of the scalp, an inch and a half long. The woman was slightly stunned, and the wound bled profusely. Very little evidence was obtained concerning her state for thirty days afterwards, but at that time the wound was an open sore, and she constantly complained of headach. She had not, however, omitted the habit of frequent intoxication, and was at a ball about a fortnight before her death, where she danced and became drunk. Eight weeks after receiving the wound, she was attacked with erysipelas of the head and scalp, and died of it in ten days. There was no proof to show where the erysipelas began, as the practitioner

given in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 4, p. 969, from a French journal. The drunken quarreller fell dead without a blow, and on dissection, enormous extravasation was found in the brain. See also *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales*. Art. *Ivresse*.

It may, however, be urged, that the tendency of the remarks in the text is to exonerate all and every one from the consequences of injuries inflicted on the intemperate. Not so, if these injuries are recent, and if they cannot be confounded with the effects of natural disease, they are to be estimated like all other wounds. Severe blows, followed rapidly by convulsions, coma and death, and exhibiting, on dissection, effusion of blood upon the brain, without any other disease of that part, present a very conclusive case of the effects of violence. Such an instance is related by Mr. Watson, in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 37, p. 97.

* Lectures, vol. 1, p. 112.

who attended had gone to sea. On dissection, the ordinary appearances, produced by that disease, were found in the scalp and within the cranium; the wound had passed into the state of a round, indolent ulcer, and a small hole, produced apparently by ulcerative absorption, penetrated the skull opposite the middle of the ulcer in the integuments. The hole was widest at its inner end. The dura mater corresponding with it was not diseased, and no purulent matter was deposited between that membrane and the bone.

On these facts, referring to the irregular habits of the female, the probable neglect of the wound, and above all, the presence of an epidemic erysipelas at the time in Edinburgh, the medical witnesses declared that the death of the deceased could not, with any certainty, be ascribed to the wound inflicted by the prisoner. The charge of murder was consequently abandoned, and the accused was found guilty of the assault.

It is remarked by the reporter of this case, that an important link of the testimony was lost, in not knowing where the erysipelas commenced. "The diagnosis between idiopathic erysipelas and that symptomatic variety which supervenes upon injuries of the head, is sufficiently simple. The former never begins, so far as we know, on the head, but always on the cheek or tip of the nose; the latter, never but about the bruise, incision or sore produced by the injury."*

Respecting tetanus, there can be comparatively but little diversity of opinion. It is a disease known to follow injuries of every description, and if it supervenes after such infliction, is, without some manifest and potent reason, to be deemed its consequence. Mal-treatment is more likely to be urged in such cases, and the attending surgeon's skill may thus be questioned.

Not long since, Captain Moir, in England, wounded a man by firing at him with a gun. The ball penetrated the inner side of the right arm, a little below the elbow, and passed out on the outside, a little above the olecranon. A profuse

* Trial of Christian Paterson for the murder of Margaret Baird. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 21, p. 433. MS. communication of Dr. Dunlop, containing the medico-legal examination.

hæmorrhage followed, but soon ceased. No bone was fractured. The surgeon called administered some brandy, as he was faint. In a short time excitement took place, for which he was bled, but locked jaw followed, and he died on the eighth day. On the trial, Capt. Moir was found guilty, and probably with great justice.

It was urged by Dr. Venables in a communication on this case, that the administration of the brandy was improper, and might have caused the tetanus, equally with or instead of the wound. Such an opinion, however, is hardly tenable.* There was no dissection.†

* London Medical Gazette, vol. 6, p. 750, 791. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 18, p. 151. Dr. Venables criticised the treatment in other respects.

† There can be no doubt that diseases of internal organs sometimes succeed injuries of various parts of the body. In illustration, I refer to Mr. Rose's paper on *depositions of pus and lymph, occurring in the lungs and other viscera after injuries*, in Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 14. He quotes Morgagni and others; and there is a case by Devaux in 1685, noticed by Chaussier, p. 208, where the surgeons directly ascribed an abscess in the liver to a previous blow on the head. Dr. Darwall's remarks subjoined below, are well worthy of consideration.

"The circumstance of depositions of pus occurring in the viscera from injuries of distant parts, has lately been attracting considerable attention. It is, however, scarcely alluded to in the text; nor, with a few exceptions, have surgeons usually regarded such depositions as connected with or induced by the injury. In the present note, I purpose to shew the various circumstances under which this has happened, but without offering any explanation. The cases have, however, been too uniform to admit of a doubt of the visceral disease being the consequence of the distant injury.

"Morgagni relates some cases in which *the lungs were found in a state of suppuration after injury of the head*.

"A boy, thirteen years of age, was struck on the right temple with a stone. He was carried to an hospital, and went on well till the fourteenth day, when fever ensued. The wound assumed an unhealthy appearance, he became delirious, and died on the twenty-fifth day from receiving the injury.

"On examination, besides the injury of the head, the lungs were very red, and small abscesses filled with pus were observable. (Morgagni Epistol, li. 13.)

"A second case is related, in which, after a similar injury, the lungs exhibited many small abscesses, and some tubercles in their progress to suppuration.

"The following case will shew how these cases will bear upon medical jurisprudence. It is taken from the evidence at an inquest which was held at Birmingham last year.

"A father and son were working together at an anvil, when the son, a boy of fourteen years of age, missed his aim in attempting to lay hold of a piece which the father had forged and cut off from an iron rod; while the boy was stooping to pick the piece up, the father knocked him down by a blow on the head with the remaining part of the iron rod. He fell down, and his head bled much; he was, however able to walk to the hospital, where the wound was dressed, and back again home. This occurred on the 23d of July: on the 10th of August a surgeon visited him for the first time, and found him apparently in the last stage of typhus fever. He died on the 12th.

"On dissection, there was considerable injury about the scalp, and matter had formed under it. There was no fracture, but matter had also formed under the dura mater, and the left hemisphere exhibited appearances of inflammation.

In 1827, a man at Edinburgh robbed another, and in the scuffle that ensued, kicked him several times, cut his nose

"In the chest 'the lungs were very much condensed, and like liver in consistency: they were inflamed, and there were three or four abscesses of recent formation. The pleura was covered with lymph; the left cavity of the chest contained a quart or more of fluid, and the right nearly as much.'

"The medical witnesses did not decide which was the proximate cause of death, nor whether the state of the lungs had any connexion with the injury of the head, and the verdict was,

"That the deceased died after a blow from his father; but 'whether from the effects of the blow or from disease, there is no evidence.'

"*Injuries of the head also frequently give rise to abscesses in the liver.*

"Bertrandi, in the 'Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Chirurgie,' relates several instances of this kind, and states that he had frequently observed suppuration of the liver when it was least expected. In some cases there is evidence of affections of the liver before death, and jaundice occurs, but this is not always observable.

"A peasant forty years of age, was admitted into the hospital at Turin for a wound in the head, which penetrated to the dura mater, and remained two months. He left the hospital in June, and returned to his usual agricultural employment. Towards the end of July he was readmitted: his face, neck and the upper part of the trunk, were enormously emphysematous, his face was marked with erysipelatous patches, his respiration was difficult, and he died in a few hours. There was nothing particular found about the head, but there was an immense abscess pointing on the convex surface of the liver. He was reported to have been jaundiced some days before, and to have alternated between a state of stupor and delirium. He had complained of a feeling of weight in the side, but never of pain.'

"*The liver and lungs frequently suffer from injuries of other parts.*

"An athletic man was admitted into the hospital on the 23d of June, under the care of Mr. Keate, with compound fracture of both bones of the right leg, a little below their centre. He went on well till the 26th, when he became feverish; a distinct rigor appeared on the 30th, and in a few days tenderness in the epigastrium and right hypochondrium occurred. The remedies employed failed to relieve him: he gradually became worse, and died on the 17th of July.

"*Sectio calaveris.*—There was a little opacity on the tunica arachnoides, with some deposition of lymph. The plexus choroides was converted into a tubercular mass of a gland-like appearance.

"The chest and abdomen presented the principal marks of disease. The pleura on the right side was intensely inflamed, and serum and pus were collected in its cavity. On the left side, the membrane was also inflamed, and serum and lymph, but no pus, were discovered. In the substance of the lungs, more especially the left, were tubercular masses of mixed lymph and pus, numerous and varying in size. In the liver was the same sort of tubercles, exceedingly numerous, and seated for the most part immediately beneath the peritoneum investing the viscus. (Medical Gazette, vol. 2, p. 510.)

"In another case of simple fracture, which terminated fatally almost a month after the accident, 'innumerable depositions of lymph and pus had been formed in the liver and the lungs.'

"The following case, quoted from the same periodical, exhibits a deposition in the liver and right knee-joint after an operation for urinary fistula. It is extracted from the Ephémérides de Montpellier for March, 1828. 'A soldier aged 22, was affected with yellowness of the skin and with tension of the right hypochondrium, after an operation for urinary fistula, which had given him great pain. The symptoms disappeared when the sound was removed from the bladder, but returned on its being again introduced into the urethra. He was seized with nausea and bilious vomiting, yellowness of the skin, excessive tenderness of the right hypochondriac region, irregular rigors, and violent pain of the right knee. He died. The liver was found

with a blow and turned him out of the house. The injured person went home, told his friends that he had been "robbed and murdered," and was confined for several days to his bed. He was not, however, considered in danger. On the third day, he complained of stiffness of the jaws, contraction of the mouth, and great difficulty of swallowing. He went out however to work two days after, but in forty-eight hours became so unwell as to return home. He was so ill with the stiffness, that he could hardly swallow a little spoon meat. The disease increased, and he died on the eleventh day after the injury.

On dissection there was found a small lacerated wound upon the nose, at the lower extremity of the suture, which unites the nasal bones. The internal parts were generally natural, except that the posterior part of the fauces was of

studded with purulent deposits, and generally softened: a collection of pus was found in the right knee-joint.' (*Medical Gazette*, vol. 2, p. 668.)

"A case of purulent deposition in the lungs after amputation, is given in the same journal. The limb was amputated in consequence of a severe compound fracture. The man was in perfect health at the time of the accident.

"Depositions of pus in the lungs have been found likewise after inflammation of the veins, some cases of which have been lately reported by Mr. Arnott.

"The spleen occasionally suffers in the same manner.

"The following description of the appearances observable in such cases, is given by Mr. Rose, in the fourteenth volume of the *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*. The paper in which it is contained deserves a very attentive perusal.

"The disease consists apparently of depositions in the cellular texture of the affected organs, partly of a white or yellowish coloured lymph, and partly of pus. These depositions vary in size, from beyond the bulk of the largest walnut to something less than a common pea. Where the lymph is most abundant, they may be described as a soft, white tubercle, of irregular shape, not contained in a cyst, but imbedded in the cellular substance of the part, and gradually blending with its natural structure. When pressed, some pus exudes from them. Where the pus collects in greater quantity, it is lodged in an irregular cavity, probably in the middle of some of the tubercles, and the walls of the abscess are formed of flakes of lymph. The number of these tubercles and abscesses vary in different instances, there being sometimes only one or two, and sometimes the whole viscera being filled with them. In the lungs they are chiefly formed in the parts adjacent to the pleura pulmonalis; and there is often at the same time an effusion into the cavity of that membrane of a sero-purulent fluid, mixed with lymph. In the liver and spleen they are dispersed throughout the substance, sometimes shewing themselves in one or more yellow patches, not elevated, on the convex surface of the great lobe of the former viscus, and at other times lodged in its substance. The parts adjacent to them shew evident marks of increased vascularity.'

"Several other cases have been noticed in Birmingham, within the last few months, of a similar kind. They have chiefly been discovered in the bodies of persons who had been killed, and upon whom inquests were held. In one instance of this kind, where death occurred within forty-eight hours, from receiving an injury of the head in fighting, the lungs were gorged with blood, and the pleura exhibited extensive marks of very recent inflammation."

DARWALL.

a dark red colour, from congestion of the vessels of the lining membrane, and a similar appearance was observed in the membrane lining the air passages.

The medical witnesses (Messrs. Newbigging, Liston, Watson, &c.) gave it as their opinion, that the deceased died of tetanus, occasioned by the wound. On being questioned whether the going out of the patient might not have been the cause, they replied, that the symptoms on the third day were proof of the disease being already present. Lock-jaw from cold was very uncommon in Scotland, and he had not left the house until the fifth day.

The charge of murder was abandoned by the public prosecutor, because the injuries received were not of a mortal nature; nor had they been inflicted with a design to commit murder. And the prisoner was found guilty of culpable homicide, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.*

2. The passions of the patient and his negligence or delay, or that of his attendants, may render slight wounds dangerous, or dangerous ones mortal. This may happen, 1. By his obstinate refusal to undergo the proper treatment, either from fear or some other cause. 2. From errors in regimen, such as intemperance, from exposure in a very cold or a very warm place, or from giving himself up to the free indulgence of his passions. 3. By disobeying the directions of his physicians, as for example, if a man who has been wounded in the throat, should laugh, talk or sing. 4. By yielding to anger or fear, so far as to tear off the bandages and dressings of the wound. All these circumstances will aggravate an injury, and render it dangerous or mortal.† There are others which may be deemed accidental causes, such as a want of proper aid, of whatever kind it may be, and from whatever source it may arise. Both of these of course increase the guilt of the criminal, if it can be proved that he inflicted the wound with a knowledge of them. To this class also belong every obstacle opposed to the surgeon's performance of his duty, and all attempts to disturb the patient, such as the prevention of sleep, and producing agitation of mind.

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 37, p. 95. Syme's *Justiciary Reports*, p. 158.

† Mahon, vol. 2, p. 28

A curious case occurred at Montpellier in 1833, which I prefer noticing under this head, although it might probably be equally well considered under the former.

On the 12th of May, Charles Crés received a slight blow on the head; he became indisposed on the 14th, and a serious illness finally developed itself, of which he died on the 20th. The physicians in attendance certified that there had been a slight contused wound on the right parietal bone, and they were of opinion that this was the cause of the headach and other severe symptoms that followed. They had no doubt that inflammation of the brain was present, and that this had given rise to the gastro-intestinal inflammation which succeeded it.

On dissection, however, *no mark of disease could be found in the brain—its vessels, or its membranes, or its bony covering.* The contused wound was superficial, not extending even through the integuments. The ventricles contained but a small quantity of serum. The lungs were, however, extensively diseased; crepitus was wanting in several portions, and on cutting into them, a large quantity of dark blood was discharged. The other parts were generally healthy.

These counter reports were submitted to the Professors at Montpellier, for their opinion. They agreed that death was not attributable either to concussion or compression of the brain, nor to inflammation of its substance or envelopes. None of the symptoms of the two first was at any time present. Indeed Crés, immediately after receiving the blow, was so little affected, as in his rage, to collect stones for the purpose of hurling them at his antagonists. No indication of compression could be shown, nor was a single mark of inflammation present. But could not this last have disappeared after death? They answer, no; death does not dissipate the marks of recent inflammations.

What then was the cause of death? Undoubtedly an inflammation of the lungs. He had been subject to this previously, and it is probable that *anger, fatigue, and probably intemperance*, all united in predisposing to the attack.

The professors, therefore, decided that the injury could not

be deemed the *direct* cause of death—although they conceded that, under the circumstances, it might be deemed what physicians call an *occasional* one—resembling in this the fatality that sometimes follows from slight or minute injuries. It is almost needless to add, that the charge of murder was abandoned.*

3. Insalubrity of the atmosphere, whether it be of a local nature, or the general constitution, may render slight wounds dangerous, and dangerous ones mortal. This circumstance has been noticed some centuries since, and the experience of every military campaign confirms its correctness. Thus, according to Bohn, Sebezius states that wounds of the head were more readily cured in Italy and Spain, than in Germany, and Foderé mentions his having observed the same on the coast of the Mediterranean, when compared with Paris. Ambrose Paré, a great name in surgery, observes, that at the siege of Rouen, many of the besiegers died of small and simple wounds, in consequence of the unhealthy atmosphere, but which was attributed by the army to poisoned weapons—an idea, which similar effects induced the inhabitants of that city also to harbour.†

Severe cold, excessive heat, storms of rain, snow or hail, have all been observed to increase the danger of wounds, and for proofs of this, I need only to refer to works on military surgery.

The air of large hospitals has also been found injurious, and it is constantly observed, that a larger proportion die of wounds in the Hotel Dieu at Paris, than in the Hospital de la Charité.‡ The very name of Hospital Gangrene, is sufficient to apprise us of the extent of the fatality that is sometimes experienced. In such cases, it is the duty of the medical examiner to apply the maxim of Hippocrates, that every thing which happens to the injured person, contrary to correct probability, does not belong to the essence of the disease. Thus, if there is a general or local morbid state of the air, and the

* Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 11, p. 474.

† Bohn, p. 78. Foderé, vol. 3, p. 276.

‡ Mahon, vol. 2, p. 25. " Dans certain hospitaux, et notamment à l'Hotel Dieu de Paris, le trepan est presque toujours mortel." Metzger, p. 376.

most cautious examination proves that the wound had not affected any essential organ, it is his duty to state these facts, and to mention that death has originated from several causes, of which the wound is the slightest, although it may have excited the developement of the others.

4. The ignorance or negligence of the surgeon may aggravate or endanger the condition of a wounded patient.* This happens when futile or injurious medicines or applications have been used—when the instruments employed are in bad order—when the surgeon is either ignorant or rash—or when seeing the danger, he does not obtain the aid of skilful persons. In general, when a dissection proves that no wound mortal in its nature has been received, and when none of the circumstances already enumerated can be urged as causing its fatality, the death of the patient should be attributed to the surgical attendant, rather than to the author of the wound, provided it be proved that he neglected the sick person, or maltreated him, by leaving foreign bodies in the wound, which might have been taken away—by not suppressing hæmorrhage—by not evacuating collections of pus when necessary—by employing tents improperly—by neglecting or hurrying operations—or by not causing the proper regimen to be observed.†

Notwithstanding the distinctions that have now been made, there are some doubtful and complicated cases, concerning which, great difference of opinion may arise, and the skill of the surgeon often forms the disputed point. To this class most commonly belong wounds of the head, such as those, for example, in which there are no symptoms indicating the necessity of trepanning, and yet extravasation is found after death. The diversity of advice given by eminent surgeons on this point during the last twenty or thirty years, may also lead to unpleasant discussions. But it is the duty of the surgeon to acquaint himself with the most approved modes of modern

* Bohn, p. 93, 96.

† The laws at a very early period attended to this circumstance. In the Roman code, the *Lex Aquilia* declared, “Si verberatus fuerit servus, non mortifere, negligentia autem perierit de vulnerato actio erit, non de occiso.” So also in the ancient French jurisprudence. If negligence or bad treatment was proved, it freed the individual, unless premeditated design was established. (Foderé, vol. 3, p. 290, 291.) The same principle practically exists in our own judicial determinations.

practice—to apply them to the symptoms presented to his view, and then, if on examination the injury is found to be such that no efforts of art could have prevented its fatality, the death of the patient is to be attributed to the nature of his wound.*

2. *Of the nature and prognostics of wounds of particular parts.*

I shall endeavour to make this section as concise as possible, as it is only intended to be a general guide to the medical examiner. The opinions deducible from it, are subject to many qualifications, which the peculiarities of every case alone indicate, and they are evidently not to be quoted as universally applicable.

We shall notice *wounds of the head* in the first place; and here a preliminary remark cannot too soon be made, or enforced, viz. that in no other part is the prognostic more uncertain, nor is there one in which the physician has more occasion for suspending his judgment. The general prognostic of wounds of the head depends on the nature of the injured parts—the age and condition of the patient—the nature of the instrument with which the wound has been inflicted—the force or violence used—the manner in which it was applied, and the effects that followed.

A wound of the integuments of the cranium, if inflicted with a cutting instrument, such as a knife or razor, may be deemed a simple wound, which will heal within the space of a few days.† But if the instrument, although a cutting one, is of great weight, and has been projected by a strong arm,

* The principal authority used in this section, is Bohn—*De Renuc. Vulner. in genere*. Foderé (vol. 2, p. 351 to 294,) and Mahon's (vol. 2, p. 1 to 62,) observations, are generally derived from this source.

† Wounds of the integuments of the skull are extremely capricious in their results; the slightest, especially punctured wounds, often communicating inflammation to the bone and membranes of the brain, while wounds much more extensive, heal readily. Of the latter, a striking example came under my own immediate observation. A soldier got drunk on the line of march, and was put into a baggage wagon, out of which he fell, his head coming right in the track of the wheel, which passed obliquely over it, stripping the whole of the integuments off one side of it, and leaving the bone completely bare. The integuments were replaced and secured by stitches, and the whole kept *in situ* by means of bandages. He travelled for four days on the wagon, when he was put into the hospital, and in less than a fortnight was enabled to resume his duty.

we should reserve our prognostic, on account of the subsequent affection of the brain, which may justly be dreaded. If a sharp-pointed instrument has been used, and it has penetrated as far as the bone, the inflammation and pain that follow, are more severe than from incised wounds. When a contused wound has been inflicted, as by a stick or stone, the prognostic will depend much on the immediate symptoms, and it will be dangerous in proportion to the dizziness, nausea, insensibility, &c. that are experienced for a short time thereafter.* A superficial contusion, accompanied with laceration and none of the above symptoms, may generally be deemed a slight wound. But a contusion however slight on the region of the

* I have found in the collection of pamphlets made by the late Sir James Mackintosh, and which (amounting to upwards of one hundred volumes) is now in the possession of my friend M. H. Webster, Esq. of this city, one with the following title: "An Appeal to the Public, touching the death of Mr. George Clarke, who received a blow at Brentford, on the 8th of December, of which he languished and died on the 14th. By John Foot, Surgeon. London, 1769."

Mr. Clarke received a blow on the head with a bludgeon, during the election riots, from Edward M'Quirk. The wound bled profusely. On his way home, he felt faint, and took some brandy. He went to bed, and his symptoms gradually became aggravated. He was bled on the 10th, but without any improvement. On the 11th, an apothecary was called in, who found him in a violent fever, with delirium. He applied remedies, and on the next day Mr. Bromfield, the surgeon, was sent for, but does not appear to have prescribed. He died in the night.

Mr. Foot was called on to examine the body before the coroner's jury. He desired the aid of Mr. Bromfield, who refused to come, "because he apprehended it might be an Old Bailey business." There was a contused wound on the head, by the side of the sagittal suture, upon the right parietal bone: the scalp was elevated for a considerable space round the wound, and the pericranium was much inflamed and separated from the skull. On removing the upper part of the skull, the dura mater directly under the part where the injury was inflicted, was found greatly inflamed and detached from the bone. Between it and the pia mater was a quantity of coagulated blood. The pia mater was inflamed, and some of its vessels ruptured. There was no fracture.

From these appearances and the history of the case, Mr. Foot gave it as his opinion, that the blow had been the cause of death, and he repeated this on the trial, where it also appeared that Clarke was a healthy young man, and of temperate habits. M'Quirk was found guilty.

Shortly after his conviction, the above testimony was referred to the Court of Examiners of the Surgeons' Company, on the ground that neither Mr. Bromfield nor the apothecary had been examined on the trial, and that Mr. Foot had never seen the deceased until after his death. The Court gave it as their opinion, but without assigning reasons, that Clarke *did not die* in consequence of the blow; and M'Quirk received a full pardon.

Of the Court of Examiners above mentioned, Percival Pott was a member; and Mr. Foot, with perfect fairness, points out his inconsistency, by referring to his *Memoir on the nature and consequences of those injuries to which the head is liable from external violence*. The only possible ground for the opinion of the Court of Surgeons, was, that the injury had been neglected. It is evidently a case greatly influenced by strong party considerations.

temporal muscles is scarcely ever exempt from danger, on account of the intimate connexion of this part with the brain, by means of its nerves, bloodvessels and membranes.

Wounds of the pericranium in good constitutions and well treated, are not dangerous; but in bad ones, they are often serious, and are succeeded by an erysipelatous inflammation, which is readily extended to the brain. A complete division of the pericranium is much less to be dreaded, than a wound from a sharp-pointed instrument. In venereal patients, caries of the bone is a frequent consequence of such injuries.*

Fracture of the bones of the cranium may take place without any correspondent injury of the integuments, and the symptoms in such cases are extremely equivocal and deceitful. As the form of the head is an arch, we should recollect that a blow does not necessarily fracture the part on which it falls, but often extends to other parts.† Our deductions must, however, be drawn from the circumstances that immediately followed the infliction of the wound; from those that afterwards supervene, and from a consideration of the causes producing them. Among the first are vertigo, loss of sense and motion, vomiting, and bleeding from the nose and ears.—Among the latter, may be coma, convulsions and paralysis. Fracture may, however, occur without any of these being present; and again, they may all be present, without any fracture, and result from concussion of the brain.‡ It should be remembered, that fracture accompanied with depression of the bone, is usually more dangerous than when none is present.

Concussion of the brain is always dangerous, as are also

* Was there ever a case known, in which the bones of a venereal patient run into caries, where no mercury had been exhibited? [DUNLOP.] Probably not, but my object was to indicate the increased irritability and consequent danger, in persons so situated being wounded. Sir A. Cooper states fatal results from operations on persons who had just gone through a mercurial course. (Lectures, vol. 1, p. 30.)

† On a trial, before the Court of Justiciary, in Scotland, in 1812, it was proved that the murder was committed by repeated blows on the top of the head, yet on dissection, it appeared that death followed from extravasation of blood from four fractures, all of which were at the base of the skull. (Dunlop's MS. Lectures.)

‡ In the London Medical Repository, vol. 23, p. 346, is a case of a man wounded with a pickaxe in the left hemisphere of the brain, with laceration of the left ventricle, who walked a mile and a half to the hospital. He died, however, in two days.

all wounds of the brain and its membranes.* On these it is not necessary to enlarge at this time. It is, however, proper to remark, that the prognostic of wounds of the head, is for the most part, that they are dangerous, and require the strictest attention. And this is rendered more necessary, since it has often happened that injurious and even fatal consequences have been produced long after the infliction of the injury, and that too, where the immediate symptoms have given little or no reason for such a termination.†

The opinion of the medical examiner, must therefore be

* "It seldom happens that concussion destroys, but when it does, nothing is found upon the examination which will account for the symptoms. It is therefore an alteration of function, but not a disorganization. But where the concussion is very violent, it is attended with lesion of the brain." (Sir A. Cooper's Lectures, vol. 1, p. 119.)

† The succeeding case will illustrate the difficulties that sometimes envelope the cause of death. "A woman received a blow on the head from a laundress's iron, but no fracture or injury of the cranium was discoverable, thought it was thereby laid bare. She was (by the advice of the celebrated Cheselden,) trepanned, and still no mark of injury about the cranium was discovered. She went abroad, and followed her ordinary business for a fortnight afterwards; but at the end of twenty days from receiving the injury, died. On opening the head, they found a very large imposthume in the middle of the brain. This occasioned some perplexity about the real cause of death. The surgeon who had managed the case, was rather inclined to attribute the death to the blow, but would by no means deny that it might have proceeded from some inward cause. The deceased had been subject to frequent and severe headaches, before the accident occurred. Mr. Cheselden being examined on the trial, declared that he could not conceive how a blow should be the cause of death, where there was no extravasation, and the person could go about for a fortnight afterwards. His allowing, however, that *similar appearances were sometimes found in the brain of persons subject to headaches*, was of more importance to the prisoner." (Smith, p. 246.) The following is one among a thousand instances where death has been induced at *distant periods* from the infliction of violence on the head. The patient died several weeks after receiving the injury, and on dissection, Mr. Charles Bell discovered a fracture at the base of the skull; and the foramen magnum having been thereby roughened, a sudden turn of the head had forced a spiculum of bone into the spinal marrow. (Smith, p. 252.) The principal and important inference to be drawn from such cases is, "the *impropriety* of maintaining the general proposition, that the death of persons recovering from the *immediate* symptoms of violence, should never be ascribed to that violence." Mr. Howship relates a case, where a slight blow on the head, at the age of fifteen, produced death *forty years* afterwards. Pain was frequently present during life, and latterly somnolency and impaired vision. On dissection, the bone at the place injured was seen transparent, and almost wholly absorbed, and the portion of brain under it was indurated and schirrous. (New England Journal, vol. 9, p. 403.) Again, in the Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 5, p. 273, a case is quoted from Lallemand on the Brain, of a boy, who had received blows on the head: symptoms of low fever followed, and he died on the twentieth day. On dissection, purulent effusion was found, and marks of inflammation and adhesion in the arachnoid opposite the right petrous portion of the temporal bone. The parents, on being questioned, confessed that he had long complained of pain in the head and the right ear. The mastoid bone was now examined, and its cells found full of pus. The physicians consequently testified, that disease had existed anterior, and that the blows could only have accelerated the fatal termination.

founded not only on general principles, but on the symptoms that are present, and when called into a court of justice, he should explain how uncertain the recovery from such injuries always is; and on the other hand, that persons have survived the most terrible accidents. The presence or absence of fever, or delirium, or coma, and the healthy or livid appearance of the wound, all aid in determining on the danger. The following aphorisms of the illustrious Vicq d'Azyr, are quoted by French surgeons as comprising the experience of the art on these points, and they are evidently deserving of remembrance. 1. That the largest wounds of the head are not always the most dangerous. 2. That it is possible to lose a considerable quantity of the brain, without death ensuing. 3. That the slightest injuries are often succeeded by fatal consequences, and that hence they should in no case be neglected. 4. That a contusion of the bone alone may gradually extend itself, so as to affect the brain.*

“Wounds of the dura mater alone are more injurious, than when both dura and pia mater are wounded. In this last, the brain immediately projects and fills up the wound. Inflammation of the dura mater spreads over the cavity down the spine, (by continuity of surface.) I have seen many instances of recovery when both were wounded; few, where the dura mater alone has been wounded,”†

Mr. Brodie, in his remarks on injuries of the brain, observes, that he has never been able to discover an instance of recovery from a wound of the posterior lobe of the cerebrum, the cerebellum or medulla oblongata.‡

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 312. I must be permitted in this place, to caution the young surgeon, not to use the trepan, without a due regard to the rules laid down in surgical works. He may otherwise be injured in his reputation before a court of justice, and his practice may be condemned by those who are better informed. “There can be only one genuine reason for trepanning, viz. to remove such pressure from the surface of the brain as gives rise to *existing* bad symptoms.” (Samuel Cooper.)

† Sir A. Cooper's Lectures, vol. 1, p. 155. “If effusion of blood be found between the dura mater and the skull, and if a bruise on the scalp correspond to the part, we may conclude that it has been caused by the blow; but if blood is found between the dura mater and the brain, though we should discover the marks of blows, or even fracture of the skull, still the question may be,—might not the patient have been attacked with apoplexy during the struggle?” (Shaw's Manual of Anatomy.)

‡ Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 13, p. 430, from Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 14.

Wounds of the face are more or less dangerous, according to the part injured, but in considering these, it is also necessary to take into account the deformity and irregular cicatrices that follow them. The latter circumstances have been noticed in the jurisprudence of England and our own country, as we shall state in the succeeding section.

Superficial wounds of the face are easily healed, but when deep, and attended with much loss of substance or denuding of the bones, they are tedious, and leave considerable deformity. Wounds of the forehead, in which the frontal muscles are divided transversely, or of the eyebrows, cause the upper eyelid to fall down, and may produce a lasting debility of the parts. Wounds of the eyes, when of considerable extent, must always be deemed dangerous, from the nature of that organ, and from the intimate connexion between it and the brain. A wound with a sharp pointed instrument, has been known to pass through the orbit, and prove fatal.* Wounds of the

* "A man has been working in a hay field, he has slipped and fallen, the prong of a fork has entered his eye, he has got up, drawn it out, thrown it from him, and instantly fallen dead, apparently without any cause. A speck of blood has been observed on the eye, it has been wiped away, an aperture has been observed, and upon examining the part, the fork has been found to have penetrated into the brain." (Abernethy's Lectures, Lancet, vol. 12, p. 3.)

Macklin the comedian, was tried for murdering another actor, by plunging at his eye with a piece of pine stick, which entered the brain through the orbit; he was acquitted, as no *malus animus* could be proved.

In the Edinburgh Observer of the 27th of January, 1833, I find the following paragraph. "Ten days ago, James Bradshaw, hatter in Greenock, having been engaged in a scuffle, received a wound in the head. He remained, slightly complaining, until the 21st. On dissection, he was found to have been killed by an injury on the eye, which had forced in the bone immediately behind the eye, (the superior orbital plate, I presume,) on the brain."

Baron Hume, in his work on Criminal Law, p. 256, mentions the case of a man of the name of Richard Carse, who was tried for murder, which he perpetrated by beating another man about the head with a *quaigh* or wooden dish, a splinter of which detached itself and entered the brain through the eye, when it snapped off short, and caused his death in a few days; the splinter was taken out of the eye after death.

These are cases where injury of the eye has caused death; in opposition to them, I shall relate some where the eye has received injuries as severe as those, to all external appearance, but which the patient has survived.

A case is related by Gooch, where a man had his eye blown out by the bursting of a gun. The surgeon dressed it, but on the second dressing, he perceived something hard among the injured substance of the eye; on examining it, he found it was metallic, and getting hold of it with his forceps, he pulled it out, when to his surprise, he found that it was the breech of the gun, which had been forced backwards by the recoil, and been jammed into the orbit. Notwithstanding this extensive injury, which totally annihilated the eye, the man made a perfect recovery.

Mr. Liston of Edinburgh, related to me the case of a man, who, while blasting the roots of trees, had a splinter driven into the eye, which from its length must have pass-

transparent cornea always leave a scar, and intercept vision.* Wounds of the iris cause a loss of sight, and if the instrument penetrates to the vitreous humour, the eye is left empty, thus combining blindness with deformity. Wounds of the nose, from a cutting instrument, leave great deformity, and particularly if the cartilaginous part be injured—if inflicted with a round instrument, or by a blow, it may not only be crushed, but the sense of smell may be destroyed. The ethmoid bone has been driven in this way upon the brain.† Lastly, a sharp pointed instrument has sometimes penetrated the nose, touched the brain, and hence proved fatal.‡ Wounds of the external

ed through the foramen opticum and penetrated into the brain. Mr. L. removed it long after, and the man recovered.

Another more extraordinary case, which also involves, not only injury of the eye, but of the brain, was related to me by a gentleman who attended the patient. In a duel in the West Indies, one gentleman hit another in the eye, the ball of which was completely obliterated, and the leaden bullet passing in through the orbit, came out in front of the external ear. Notwithstanding which, the officer recovered with the same facility as if he had only undergone the infliction of a flesh wound.

Sometimes balls find their way into the lower part of the orbit, or somewhere behind the ball of the eye and deprive it of sight altogether. I saw an instance of this in Canada. Lieut. Gray, my brother officer, received a shot in the left cheek, the ball lodged behind the right eye, and totally deprived him of the use of it. What renders this case the more extraordinary is, that though the shot, which was a small one of that kind, known by the name of “buck shot,” and which the Americans introduced in warfare, must have either penetrated through the nose, or through the brain, no bleeding at the nose followed the wound, and the only appearance by which it could externally be known that the ball had injured the eye, was, that it was very much inflamed and blood-shot for some days. When these appearances went off, he was completely deprived of sight in the right eye, and something like a squint or at least a want of power, in moving that eye in concert with the other, remained ever after.

DUNLOP.

The reader will derive much useful information on this point, by consulting “cases and observations illustrative of the fatal effects of punctured wounds and injuries of the orbit,” by Dr. John Scott, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surg. Jour.* vol. 42, p. 359.

* Dr. Monteath mentions a case of a person attempting to separate two persons, who were fighting, and who received a blow on one of his eyes. The eye-ball was burst and vision entirely destroyed. (*Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 2, p. 640.)

† “A man was killed by a blow on the nose—the consequence of which in the interim, was, that the lower jaw could not be opened, and in the opinion of the surgeon, he died from inanition, sixteen days after the accident. He was also unable to perform the usual natural evacuations. There was no fracture about the head, and the external wound had nearly healed up.” (Smith, p. 254.)

‡ Blows on the nose which have the effect of fracturing the bone, produce frequently, not only personal deformity, but ultimately loss of the power of smelling, and sometimes an insufferable stench, proceeding from the diseased state of the bone inside of the nose, called by the French surgeons, *punais*, which has the effect of rendering its unfortunate victim quite unbearable in society. I had a case of this kind under my charge, while in the army. The patient was a lad of the name of Tobin, who, though I tried every mode of recovering him, was ultimately obliged to be discharged from the regiment, because the stench he created was so intolerable, that it was found im-

ear are unaccompanied with danger, but the deformity is a serious one. Wounds of the internal ear may either destroy hearing, or from their vicinity to the brain, prove in themselves dangerous. Wounds of the lips, if there be great loss of substance, not only deform, but are injurious to the speech, and are sometimes accompanied with a constant flow of saliva, particularly when any of the glands have been opened. Wounds of the ranular artery sometimes occur in children, from dividing the frænum, and where the hæmorrhage cannot be suppressed, they have been known to prove fatal.* Wounds of the parotid gland are always tedious in curing, and they sometimes become fistulous.

In all cases of wounds of the face, the physician should state in his report, the degree of deformity that has been produced.

Wounds of the neck also vary greatly as to their danger. Wounds of the integuments and muscles of the neck, may be considered simple wounds, but it must be added, that they generally heal with difficulty, in consequence of the mobility and looseness of the parts.† Transverse cuts may indeed prove dangerous, and affect the motions of the head, or of the pharynx or larynx, and thus prove an impediment to the due exercise either of speech or deglutition. Wounds of the ca-

possible for any one to sleep in the same barrack room with him. He had received an injury which had beat in the bones of his nose, previous to entering the regiment, but so far as I am aware, the disease broke out afterwards.

DUNLOP.

* Wounds of the arteries of the cheek internally, sometimes prove dangerous, from the bystanders not having skill or presence of mind enough to stop the bleeding by the very simple means of placing the finger inside of the mouth and compressing the artery against the thumb externally. And instead of this, they generally resort to the application of styptics and charpie. A young lady in the west of Scotland, nearly lost her life from this mode of treatment. Wounds of the artery sometimes cut in dividing the frænum of the tongue, are easily commanded by squeezing the divided end in a cleft twig covered with lint.

DUNLOP.

† There is a remarkable case of sudden death from the division of the external jugular vein alone, related in the Boston Medical Magazine, vol. 3, p. 117. The individual was in prison waiting his trial for piracy. He awoke in a state of delirium, attempted to strangle himself, but failing in this, went to the window and broke out a piece of glass, and wounded himself with it, just under the angle of the lower jaw. Then by a rapid succession of cuts, he extended it from side to side, but fell immediately into the arms of his companion, and after gasping two or three times was dead. He had not lost more than a pint of blood.

On dissection, neither the trachea nor any of the arteries or nerves, was found injured. And nothing but a divided vein was seen, and which was probably the principal external jugular. The reporter (Dr. Flint, I presume,) suggests, whether this sudden death may not have arisen from the admission of air into the vein.

rotids and internal jugulars, are generally fatal,* since it is often impossible to procure the necessary assistance in time to check the mortal hæmorrhage, and for this reason, lacerated wounds of these parts are not so soon fatal as clean cuts.† Wounds of the pharynx and œsophagus are peculiarly dangerous, as other important parts are generally divided along with them, but even if injured alone, as from stabs or gun-shot wounds, they are much to be dreaded, since the nourishment of the system must be carried on through them, and the action of deglutition is directly opposed to a speedy adhesion of parts.‡ Even wounds of a portion of the fibres surrounding the œsophagus, are dangerous, inasmuch as they produce a weakness of the action of deglutition, and also by the inflammation that sometimes supervenes, tend to induce compression on the trachea. Wounds of the larynx are serious injuries, as

* There is one instance, and only one, of a divided carotid not proving fatal. In this instance, Mr. Carpué of London, being called at the moment, secured the vessel. DUNLAP. The case of general Arrighi, (Duke of Padua,) may be added. He was wounded by a musket ball, at the siege of Acre, by which the external carotid was cut across, near the place where it is given off by the internal, and as it enters the parotid. The gush of blood from both apertures attracted the attention of the artillerymen, and one of them instantly pushed a finger into each opening and thus arrested the flow of blood. Baron Larrey was immediately called, and by maintaining pressure, saved the life of the patient. (Larrey's Memoirs, vol. 1, p. 176.) Some other cases are given by him in his later editions. There is also an instance of recovery, probably from a wounded carotid, given by Delpech. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 7, p. 244.) Another by Mr. Garret, in the Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 2, p. 235.

† But even the latter may be compatible with a very short continuance of life, and even some powers of locomotion. At least, this would seem probable, from the following case, mentioned by Professor Amos in his Lectures on Medical Jurisprudence at the London University.

At the Warwick assizes, (1832) John Danks was tried for the murder of Mary Green. After conviction, he confessed that he had cut her throat with a knife in a hovel, and the surgeon found a wound seven inches long and three in depth, dividing the trunk of the carotid, and all the principal branches of the external carotid and jugulars, yet, in this state it would appear that she ran twenty-three yards, besides crossing a bar gate, three feet ten inches high. At this distance, at least, the body was found, and the criminal persisted to the last in denying that he had touched her, except in the hovel, where he left her for dead. A gentleman went over the ground after the trial and it took him about thirty seconds. Scarcely any blood was observed in the intermediate space, and this is explained by supposing that she closed the wound with her cap, and also by holding down her head. Much blood had however flowed down her breasts and lodged about the pubes. In the hovel also a large quantity was observed. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 10, p. 183.)

‡ Larrey relates of a grenadier, wounded in Egypt by a bayonet, the broken point of which remained for six weeks deep in the left side of the pharynx, behind the arch of the palate. On its extraction, which was effected with great difficulty, the voice, which had been entirely lost, was instantly restored. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 18, p. 474.)

they derange or weaken the voice.* A wound of the recurrent nerve alone on one side, seriously affects this organ, but if both be divided, a complete muteness will follow. Injuries of this description, however, if not of a complicated nature, cannot be considered mortal. Penetrating wounds of the trachea are always dangerous, since from its never being in a perfectly quiet state, it is difficult to produce a speedy re-union.† Numerous cases, however, prove that a partial transverse division is not mortal, but it is allowed that a complete division is generally so;‡ more, however, from the vessels that must be divided to accomplish this, than from the injury itself.§ Wounds of the par vagum, either on one or both

* A Prussian Major was wounded in the larynx by a musket ball. The wound healed but the voice was lost. He recovered it, however, gradually, in the course of a year. Case by Dr. Francke. (*Quart. Jour. of For. Med. and Surg.* vol. 1, p. 338.)

† A fatal case of rupture of the trachea by a kick, is mentioned in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 18, p. 412.

‡ A case occurred in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, where the trachea was totally divided by violence. A boy driving the gin of a coal pit, placed himself on the end of the lever. On stretching out his head to look at something, his throat came in contact with a post; such was the force with which he was going round, that the trachea was ruptured across. He survived for several days, but in great agony. DUNLOP.

§ There are, however, cases mentioned by surgical writers, in which the trachea was completely cut asunder, and even the œsophagus opened, without any wound of the carotid artery. (*Dorsey's Surgery*, vol. 1, p. 69.) The following are references to cases in which both the trachea and œsophagus were divided.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 16, p. 353. The case did not terminate fatally, although the parts did not unite.

Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 4, p. 24. By Dr. Van Cleve of Princeton. A blacksmith thrust his red hot nail rod at a man, and perforated both the trachea and œsophagus. Died in a few hours in attempting to swallow.

Lancet, N. S. vol. 5, p. 309, and *Maryland Medical Recorder*, vol. 2, p. 241. Case by Professor Luders of Kiel; attempt to commit suicide with a curved knife; no large bloodvessels or nerves wounded; the parts gradually united.

Hennen's Military Surgery, p. 291. Case by Dr. James Johnson, seen at Prince of Wales' Island in the East Indies. A Malay cut his comrade's throat while asleep; the larynx divided, and also half of the œsophagus; supported by enemas, and gradually recovered.

Case of wounded trachea and œsophagus, with a razor, by Dr. Neumann, where the patient survived fourteen days. (*London Medical Quarterly Review*, vol. 3, p. 209, from *Graefe and Walther's Journal*.)

"The following case was communicated to me by my friend, Mr. Marshall, author of a work on the Medical Topography of Ceylon, under whose charge the patient was. When the Indian army was sent to Ceylon, during the mutiny in that country in 1818 and 1819, a native cooly or labourer, who followed the camp, was shot through the throat, the ball dividing the windpipe and œsophagus both together. He lived for some days after in a state of the most dreadful and excruciating suffering; the contents of the stomach, or the food he attempted to swallow, choking up the windpipe, and producing violent fits of coughing, which threatened him with instant death from suffocation. His breathing was so loud that it could be heard outside of the tent where he lay."

DUNLOP.

sides, are absolutely fatal. Fractures of the cervical vertebræ are highly dangerous, and if the spinal marrow be injured, they are fatal.* Luxation of the neck is generally fatal, from pressure on the same part.† Wounds piercing the vertebræ, or passing between them, are suddenly mortal. Injuries of the neck from contusion, are always dangerous, and should they end in death, must be judged of by the appearances that are found on dissection, as extravasated blood, laceration, &c.‡

Wounds of the thorax are divided into external wounds—into penetrating wounds, unaccompanied with injury to any of the organs in that cavity, and into penetrating wounds, with lesions of those organs.

External wounds from a cutting instrument belong to the class of simple wounds, but from contusions or falls, may become dangerous, either through the extension of inflammation to the internal parts, or from the rupture of some bloodvessels. Fracture of the ribs, if not complicated with their sharp points pricking inwardly, is not absolutely dangerous, although there is even then some impediment to respiration, and some apprehension of inflammation. But should the rib be much splintered, and the points not be reducible, it may end fatally. Penetrating wounds are not in general dangerous, unless combined with fracture of the ribs, or the rupture of some bloodvessels. Internal hæmorrhage or emphysema is often a dangerous, and even fatal symptom. Wounds of the lungs are dangerous, and the prognostic is always doubtful when the injury has been inflicted at the upper part of the thorax, or at the posterior side near the junction of the ribs with the ver-

* A remarkable case was stated by Soemmering in 1793, of a patient in whom there was a fracture and luxation of the vertebral column. He suffered extreme pain, and his extremities gradually became gangrenous—but he survived five months. Metzger, p. 320. See an analysis of Casper on Wounds of the Spinal Marrow, by Dr. Geddings, in *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 6, p. 192.

† Dr. Spencer of Ticonderoga, relates a case of this kind in a man who fell backwards in attempting to scale a fence. The dentatus was luxated anteriorly on the third cervical vertebra. He lost all sensation below the head, but preserved his speech and mind to the last. He died in forty-eight hours. (*Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 10, p. 173.)

‡ An instance of a very severe wound of the neck, occurred in the case of general Ripley, wounded in the sortie from Lake Erie in 1814. An account of it, with the narrative of his recovery, by Dr. E. L. Allen, will be found in the *Transactions of the Physico-Medical Society of New-York*, vol. 1, p. 85.

tebræ. The symptoms here require the strictest attention, as no case should be despaired of.* These organs are also subject to concussion, which is termed *wind concussion*, and is usually fatal. Fractures, luxations, and contusions of the vertebral column, are all highly dangerous, and may sooner or later prove fatal.

It is difficult to conceive of the pericardium being wounded without a correspondent injury of the heart. But, if separate, it is to be deemed a highly dangerous wound.† Wounds of the heart, of its ventricles and auricles, are mortal, but it is remarkable that numerous cases are on record, where life has been prolonged for a considerable time after the infliction of the injury. Bohn quotes several cases of the kind,‡ and an instance occurred in the British army in Spain some years since, where a soldier survived for thirteen days with a musket ball in his heart.§ The reason in some of these ca-

* A very extraordinary case of this kind came under my care some years ago. Sergeant Verney of the 89th regiment, at the battle of the Falls of Niagara, received a shot on the breast, about an inch and a half on the right side of the sternum, which came out behind about the same distance from the spine; the lungs were completely penetrated, and the air passed through both apertures. On his being brought to me, I thought the wound must necessarily prove mortal, and having a great many wounded to attend to, I merely dressed it with lint, but secured by straps; next day, instead of finding him dead as I expected, I found that he was easier and that fever had commenced. I bled him freely and paid particular attention to him, and in the course of a fortnight he was so well as to be fit to be removed to the general hospital at York. He afterwards recovered completely.

Mr. Maiden's case of the man who was transfixd through the thorax by a gig shaft, must be fresh in the memory of every medical man. DUNLOP.

† Larrey mentions several cases which he deemed wounds of the pericardium, and that were cured. Sir A. Cooper relates one where the wound was inflicted with a reaping hook, and the patient survived two or three weeks. (Lectures, vol. 3, p. 169.)

‡ Pages 26, 221, 222.

§ Instances of people living for any period, longer or shorter, after the heart has received a severe injury, are to be found in every work on forensic medicine, and these are not to be looked upon merely as physiological curiosities; they sometimes involve questions of life and death.

A case was tried in Glasgow in 1819, of which the following is an outline. The keeper of a house of bad fame in Greenock, was indicted for the murder of a sailor, by shooting him through the chest. It appeared from the evidence of the medical witnesses, that the auricles and part of the aorta next the heart, were shattered to atoms by the slugs and brass nails with which the piece was charged; and in their opinion he must have dropped down dead the moment he received the shot; therefore, as the body was found in the street, and the door of the house was eighteen feet up an entry, it followed that the prisoner must have run into the street and there shot him. For the prisoner it was urged and proved that he had shot him through the door of his own house, which he was attempting to enter by force. And besides direct testimony from those within the house and from a lad who was along with the deceased at the time, it came out in evidence that there was a stream of blood from

ses is, that the instrument which causes the wound, prevents, by its closing the aperture, the fatal hæmorrhage which otherwise would soon follow. In other cases it may be the clot. Formidable however, and imminently dangerous as these wounds are, it is not to be denied, that probably some have survived an injury of the heart. "There is reason to believe," says Dr. Dorsey, "that the heart has often been slightly wounded without fatal consequences."* Wounds of the

the door of the house to the spot where the body was found, which could not have run from the body towards the house, as the threshold of the door was on a higher level than the pavement of the street. On this evidence the prisoner got an unanimous verdict of acquittal.

DUNLOP.

* On this interesting subject of wounds of the heart, I have collected some references which may be of use to the medical witness. The case in the text of the soldier in Spain, is in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 14, p. 129. Triller in Schlegel, 5, p. 249: A wound fatal after 14 days.

Pelletan's Surgery: The aorta wounded with a small sword, yet the patient survived two months.

Medical Records and Researches, p. 59. Case by Dr. Babington: The right ventricle and both lobes of the lungs penetrated by a bayonet; survived nine hours.

Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2. Case by Mr. Featherton; ventricle wounded by a bayonet, but the patient walked about the ward on the second day. He died in 49 hours.

Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 14, p. 463. Case by Boyer, at La Charité: Wound of the left ventricle with a knife; died in nine days.

American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 15, p. 532. Case by Dr. Fris, at Naples; Survived a wound of the ventricle with a knife, ten days.

New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 5, p. 314. Case by Professor Stevens: Wound from a needle; the pericardium was punctured in ten or twelve places, and the right ventricle lacerated. No doubt the beating of the heart against the head of the needle caused these punctures. Death ensued in a few hours.

Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 10, p. 245. Case by M. Ferrus: A maniac wounded himself with an iron stilet; survived twenty days; and on dissection, the instrument was found strongly fixed in the substance of the left ventricle. The case is also given in detail by Orfila, *Legons*, 2d edition, vol. 2, p. 480.

Ibid. vol. 22, p. 453. Case at Hotel Dieu; Right ventricle wounded with a kitchen knife; survived a month.

Ibid. vol. 23, p. 84, Dupuytren's cases.

Ibid. vol. 25, p. 183, from the *Trans. of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association*, vol. 2: A boy shot himself with a gun made out of the handle of a roasting fork; it entered the thorax, and disappeared. The boy walked about, and said he was well for a fortnight, but finally wasted away, and died in five weeks and two days after the accident; and on dissection, the stick was found in the right ventricle, forcing itself between the columnæ carneæ, and the internal surface of the heart, and encrusted with a thick coagulum. No wound could be discovered in the heart or pericardium. This case is related by Mr. Davis.

Sedillot, (p. 243,) relates of a young student of medicine, who, desirous of destroying himself, inflicted a wound with a double bladed knife in the cardiac region, and afterwards divided the crural vein. On dissection, the left ventricle was found to be penetrated, but the hæmorrhage was so slight as clearly to indicate the other wound as the cause of death.

Let it not, however, be supposed from these examples, that wounds of the heart are not suddenly mortal. Individuals often die either instantly after a wound, or life is only protracted for a few minutes.

base of the heart are, however, almost invariably mortal. Wounds of the aorta and vena cava are fatal.* It is hardly possible that the thoracic duct can be wounded without affecting other vital parts, but if it should occur, we must deem it fatal, as the chyle, instead of passing in its ordinary course, is diffused into the cavity of the thorax.† For similar reasons, the lower part of the œsophagus is scarcely, if ever, wounded separately; but if so, it is certainly mortal, as it prevents the proper passage of the food, and totally impedes the function of nutrition. Wounds of the vena azygos are mortal, as they are attended with a hæmorrhage which it is impossible to suppress. Wounds of the diaphragm, if made with a sharp pointed instrument, such as a sword, are dangerous, if only the muscular parts be injured; but if the tendinous ones are also injured, they are considered fatal.‡

In the case of Mrs. Hamilton, murdered by Clough in 1833, at Bordentown, (New-Jersey,) by repeated stabs with a dirk, seven wounds penetrated the left lung, and three entered the left ventricle. She walked some distance down stairs after this, and held some conversation, but soon fell, and died in fifteen minutes.

Robert Cully, the police man, stabbed through the heart in London, May 14, 1833, ran thirty yards, and then exclaiming "I am very ill," fell down and expired.

Instances of the heart being found cicatrized are given in *Lancet*, vol. 7, p. 22, Bougon's case. *Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences*, vol. 1, p. 329. Case by Dr. Randall of Tennessee, of a negro boy shot in the breast with a fowling piece. He survived 67 days, and at one time was able to walk about. On dissection, the spots where the shot entered were found cicatrized, and three shot were found in the right ventricle, and two in the right auricle. Dr. Drake, in his observations on this case, refers to other instances. (See his *Journal*, vol. 1, p. 329 and vol. 3, p. 297.)

* See Hays' *American Cyclopædia of Medicine and Surg.* vol. 2, p. 185, Art. *Wounds of the aorta*, by Dr. Geddings. Dr. Dunlop in his MS. Lectures, mentions that it was formerly the custom in the Portuguese army, to punish delinquents by striking them on the back with the flat of a heavy sword, of which the consequence sometimes was, rupture of the blood vessels of the chest and even of the aorta.

† Blumenbach refers to a case in Lentin where life continued, though in a weak state, for many months after a rupture of the thoracic duct. (Elliotson's *Blumenbach*, p. 362.)

‡ I have taken this distinction from the systematic writers, although I am perfectly convinced of the correctness of a remark of Dr. Marc. that *it is useless to distinguish between wounds of its tendinous and muscular portions*. (Godman's *West. Reporter*, vol. 1, p. 44.) A very curious case of wounded diaphragm, which from its consequences, proved fatal at the end of eleven months, is mentioned in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 8, p. 42.

Cases of recovery from a punctured wound are given in *London Medical Repository*, June, 1824, by Mr. Wood; in *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 4, p. 421, from a stab in the muscular part, by Prof. Bernt. Percy (*Dictionnaire des Sciences Medicales*, vol. 9, Art. *Diaphragm*, rupture of,) says that when not immediately fatal, patients suffer greatly from it, and on dissection, the edges of the rupture are found callous and rounded. A medico-legal case, in which rupture of the diaphragm was present, is stated at p. 74 of this volume.

As a general deduction from these remarks, it may be observed, that the prognostic in wounds of the thorax is, in most cases, an unfavourable one, although they are not often mortal, unless some primary organs be injured. John Bell, indeed, directs his pupils never to call any wound mortal, unless it be plainly a wound of the heart. This advice may be proper in surgery, but it can have no bearing in legal medicine, since it practically excludes all prognostics whatever. I have therefore given the best founded opinions that I could obtain, and will only add, that the prognostic in wounds of the lungs should in general be delayed, as the cases of recovery from desperate ones are so numerous, that we can never be justified in peremptorily declaring any particular instance a mortal wound. Wounds from fire-arms are, however, always more hazardous than those from cutting or sharp-pointed instruments.

Wounds of the abdomen, like those of the thorax, are divisible into external or penetrating wounds. The former are to be deemed simple, unless they have been accompanied with a violent shock of the system, or are of large extent. Penetrating wounds are to be dreaded, either from touching the peritoneum, and thereby causing inflammation, or from producing ventral hernia, and in the latter case, the apprehension will be graduated on the nature of the viscus that has passed out, and the inflammation and strangulation that accompany it.*

Penetrating wounds may also strike one or more of the viscera contained in the abdomen, and in that case, the accidents that occur, and the medico-legal questions that arise, are among the most perplexing of this branch of our subject. Wounds of the stomach are to be deemed highly dangerous, although there has been great diversity of opinion concerning their mortality. Bohn and Teichmeyer pronounce all mortal, and the instances of escape, as almost miraculous, while Alberti, Boerhaave and Valentini, consider those only mortal which have injured the lower part and the two orifices. A

* The necessity of returning it as early as possible, is very manifest, and if this be not done, the criminal may escape punishment, at the expense of the surgeon's reputation. See a case of this kind in Smith, p. 263.

wound of the stomach was declared accidentally mortal by the medical faculty of Giessen, and absolutely mortal by the medical college at Frankfort; while in another case, a wound was considered mortal by the faculty at Leipsic, and not so by those of Helmstadt and Wirtemberg.*

This contrariety of opinion has arisen from a consideration of the following circumstances; wounds of the stomach have sometimes been cured without any bad consequences; various substances, such as knives, forks, pins, &c. have been swallowed without immediate injury; and the operation of gastrotomy has been occasionally performed with safety.† All these facts tend to show, that wounds of the stomach are not absolutely mortal, but they do not permit us to deny their danger.‡ Certainly, if inflicted with a sharp pointed instrument, and penetrating, they are to be deemed hazardous, and the chance of death is increased, when the blood vessels or nerves of the part have been injured.§ But a rupture or division of the coats of the stomach may also be affected by a severe contusion, or a blow on the part, without any external wound, surgically speaking, being present. Fabricius mentions the case of a man who was so dreadfully trodden under foot, that not only the stomach was burst, but there was a rupture of the diaphragm, and the food passed into the cavity

* Mahon, vol. 2, p. 122. Valentini's *Pandects*, vol. 2, p. 413 to 432. All the writers on legal medicine agree, that a wound inflicted on a full stomach is more dangerous than one on that organ when empty. It should therefore be a subject of inquiry, how long before the injury a meal had been taken.

† See a case of this nature in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 1, p. 103. Also in *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 19, p. 178.

‡ The remarkable case of Dr. Beaumont, is of itself sufficient to show that life can be preserved after a severe and extensive wound of the stomach. Other cases of recovery from wounds have been related by Mr. Travers, in *North-American Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 2, p. 199; by Mr. Breton, in *Transactions of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta*, vol. 1, p. 59; by Mr. Scott, in *Medical Communications*, referred to by Sir A. Cooper; *Lectures*, vol. 3, p. 155; by Dr. Beatty, *Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine*. Art. *Death from wounds*, vol. 4, p. 556.

§ Dr. Andrew Duncan, jun., in a clinical lecture at Edinburgh, (1830) mentioned the following case, which may serve as a check to hasty opinions. A man died, in the Infirmary, of rupture of the ascending aorta. Death was not, however, immediate, as he survived several hours in consequence of a clot acting as a partial valve. On dissection, the stomach was found distended with blood, and the bystanders were already engaged in conjectures as to the cause, when the removal of the fluid showed the perfect state of that organ, and it became evident that the blood must have been swallowed, according as it was discharged from the aneurism. (*Lancet*, N. S., vol. 6, p. 169.)

of the thorax, and notwithstanding this, except some slight elevations of the epidermis in the form of vesicles, the integuments and abdominal muscles did not appear in the least injured.* It will not appear surprising that sudden death should be the consequence of a blow on the epigastric region, when it is recollected that it is the seat of the solar plexus, and of the semi-lunar ganglion,† parts especially subservient to life, and also, that on dissection, no inflammation of the stomach and the other organs, should in such a case be found?‡

* Mahon, vol. 2, p. 126. Dupuytren mentions the case of a soldier struck with a cannon ball obliquely on the left flank, which produced no external wound, but an early death discovered dreadful injury to the kidney, the lumbar vertebrae and nerves, the lower ribs, and the parietes of the abdomen. The skin alone had resisted the disorganizing action of the shot. (*Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 25, p. 298.)

† The effects of severe blows on the stomach, though well known to the vulgar, are hardly accounted for satisfactorily by the learned. A severe blow on the head, the seat of nervous contraction, often does not produce so violent an effect as a very slight blow over the semi-lunar ganglion. A case occurred in London, some years ago, where a man killed his comrade by giving him a pat on the pit of his stomach with his open hand. By the practice of the Scotch courts, if one man kills another by a blow on the stomach, the fact of his having done so is construed into malice, or what amounts to the same thing, *recklessness*, as it is termed.—DUNLOP.

‡ “*Inspectio et sectio aliquando nihil declarant*,” says Bohn, p. 114. So also sometimes with blows on the head; and a case of the latter description is cited by Smith, (p. 250) from the History of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Paris. “A stout young criminal, condemned to be broken on the wheel, ran head foremost against the wall of his dungeon, with his hands behind him, and instantly fell dead. On opening the head, not the slightest appearance of injury was discoverable, either in the skull, brain, cerebellum, or spinal marrow, except a very minute separation in the squamous suture, which could not account for so sudden a death. The substance of the brain was unusually firm.”

This point is so important, that I must be permitted to enlarge somewhat on it. “Slight injury to the stomach, (says Sir Astley Cooper,) although it does not occasion any sensible organic change, will sometimes destroy life. A man recovering from fever, and walking in Fleet-street, quarrelled with a woman; another female came up and gave him a blow in the region of the stomach, which caused almost instantaneous death. Upon dissection, to discover the cause of his expiring so suddenly, no morbid change was perceptible. Again, a healthy labourer at the India house was attempting to lift a heavy weight, when another labourer came up and said, “Stand on one side, and let an abler man try;” at the same time, he gave the former a slight blow on the region of the stomach, when the poor fellow immediately dropped down and expired. On examination, there was not any mark of violence discovered.” (*Lectures*, vol. 1, p. 11.) Dr. Paris remarks that inflammation is out of the question in these cases, and therefore the slight redness of the stomach that is occasionally observed can alone be accounted for, by regarding it as the effect of the sudden cessation of the action of the heart (which has been found empty) producing an accumulation of blood in the extreme arterial branches. (*Paris’s Medical Jurisprudence*, vol. 2, p. 121, 174.)

Mr. Lambert, a respectable individual in New-York, received a blow on the stomach from some rioters, immediately after coming from a supper party. He died almost immediately. On dissection, no mark of injury could be discovered, except some small red spots on the internal surface of the stomach, and there was no mark of external contusion. The brain was healthy. Dr. Post and the other witnesses

Wounds of the intestines are less to be dreaded than those of the stomach, and the instances of recovery are infinitely more numerous. But although all surgical works abound with these, we must not deem them destitute of danger, and if death follows after proper treatment, it is to be attributed to the injury.* Wounds of the smaller intestines are more dangerous than those of the larger, not only because they perform more important functions, but are supplied with a great-

concurrent in believing that the blow was the cause of death, and not sudden fright. The prisoner was convicted of manslaughter. I have given the details of this case in the *New-York Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 5, p. 427.

If we deem the above cases of any weight, we can hardly justify the following decision, mentioned by Dr. Yeats. "Some years ago, I was subpoenaed to give my opinion concerning the cause of death of a young woman, who had been severely kicked in the region of the stomach by a man. She was never well from that time to the day of her death, which happened several months after, and she frequently vomited blood. On opening the body after death, the internal coat of the stomach was found inflamed. During my examination, I was asked by the court, whether the appearances would not appear without the ill treatment she had received; upon my affirmative answer, that such appearances sometimes occurred from constitutional causes, the judge directed the jury to acquit the prisoner, who was on his trial for murder." (*Brande's Journal*, N. S., vol. 3, p. 166.)

* Several cases of rupture of the intestines from violence are related. *Dublin Hospital Reports*, vol. 4, p. 349, by Mr. Speer, of the cæcum, from a fall in wrestling. *Western Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 1, p. 550, by Dr. Drake, of the jejunum, from the kick of a horse. *Modico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 24, p. 142: Two cases of rupture of the jejunum, one from a kick, and the other from a cart passing over the abdomen, quoted from Bransby Cooper. All these proved fatal.

Lydia Alder was tried in 1744, for the murder of her husband, whom she kicked in the groin, in consequence of which, having at the time an inguinal rupture, mortification came on, and he died. Verdict, manslaughter. (*Paris and Fonblanque*, vol. 2, p. 122.)

The following is a curious case, as well for its antiquity as the medical testimony presented. I apprehend, also, that at the present day, a conviction under the circumstances elicited, could hardly take place.

In 1678, in a drinking bout, Philip, Earl of Pembroke, struck Mr. Cony on the head, and afterwards kicked him. The next day, he was seized with severe pains in the shoulders, and afterwards in the bowels, which continued until his death. Fainting fits occurred, but it was proved that he had been subject to them. There was no discoloration or bruises on the abdomen. He died on the sixth day, and after death, a large black bruise was found on the breast; the body was swollen and discoloured in various places, and a large quantity of extravasated blood was, on dissection, seen in the lower part of the abdomen.

Dr. Conquest deposed that Cony was very intemperate, and had drunk large quantities of beer during his illness. To these, he attributed the gripes and vomiting, and the extravasation, although he states expressly that the bowels were not ruptured or bruised. The patient never complained of kicks or bruises. Dr. Lower, who saw him in consultation the day before he died, found no marks of fever, either in his tongue, pulse or water. The caul was withered and consumed, and Mr. Raven (I presume, a surgeon,) deposed that "it was well known to all physicians, that in all natural deaths, there must be extravasated blood in the lower belly."

Lord Pembroke was tried by his peers at Westminster Hall, and 18 votes declared him not guilty, while 40 pronounced him guilty of manslaughter. (*Hargrave's State Trials*, vol. 2, p. 461.)

er number of nerves.* Wounds of the mesentery cannot be deemed mortal, unless some of the large bloodvessels of the organ, or its principal glands, be injured, and in these cases, the danger arises from not being able to suppress the hæmorrhage, or to supply the loss of the chyle. Wounds of the omentum are to be estimated like those of the mesentery; but it deserves remark, that a contusion is apt to induce inflammation and gangrene.† Wounds of the pancreas seldom occur, unless some other viscus be injured at the same time. If they should happen separately, the cause must have been an instrument entering at the back, and its wound cannot be considered as mortal, unless some arterial or venous vessels have been injured. Wounds of the liver are generally mortal, and their fatality originates in some bloodvessel being injured, or in the consequences that ensue. Superficial injuries are, however, frequently healed.‡ Wounds of the gall-bladder are deemed absolutely mortal, as its fluid is stimulating to a high degree, and occasions inflammation and most violent pain.§ Wounds of the various ducts are mortal.

* It would appear that the small intestines possess some of the irritable sympathy so conspicuous in the stomach—death being brought on by some unaccountable cause when they are only slightly injured. Foderé mentions a case where instant death was caused by a small prick in the small intestines, inflicted by the point of a butcher's knife, though there was neither a sufficient effusion of blood to account for such a result by its effects on the vascular system, nor a sufficient length of time for inflammation and its consequences to arise.—DUNLOP.

† If the omentum is protruded, and not speedily returned, it will, in common with all the other viscera of the abdomen, inflame and bring on gangrene; but the omentum is less obnoxious to inflammation than any other viscus. A strong illustration of this fact was related to me by a medical friend. A peon or messenger was brought to him in India, who had received a stab in the side, three weeks before, through the wound of which the omentum had all this time protruded. On examination, he found that the viscus was adhering to the wound all round, and that inflammation had commenced without and been communicated to the interior of the cavity. Gangrene supervened, of which he died in a few days after.—DUNLOP.

‡ A case of recovery from a stab into the liver with a table knife, is given by Dr. N. R. Smith, in *North-American Archives*, vol. 1, p. 385.

§ There are but very few cases on record of wounds of the gall-bladder distinct from other injury. I have collected the following. *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 36, p. 341; an officer in whom the fundus was penetrated. He lived a week. Sir Astley Cooper's *Lectures*, vol. 3, p. 164; case by Mr. Edlin. Wound with a bayonet. Death ensued in 13 hours. Sabatier mentions another case, fatal on the third day. Dr. R. Coates, in the article, *Wounds of the Abdomen*, in *Hays' Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine and Surgery*, however, refers to two cases of recovery, one by Paroisse, and the other by Fryer. "I have never known a patient," says Hennen, "recover after a wound of the gall-bladder, except a previous adhesion had taken place to the parietes," and then quotes Paroisse's case. A case, he adds, I believe unique, is re-

Those of the spleen are to be estimated like wounds of the liver; if deep and penetrating, death will follow from hæmorrhage. There are, however, many cases of recovery from injury to this organ.* It is a common circumstance in cases of sudden death from accidents, falls, &c. to find the spleen or liver lacerated; and this is therefore to be deemed a fatal injury.† Wounds of the kidneys have often been successfully treated; they are, however, dangerous, according to their depth, and the effusion of urine (if any) into the abdomen.‡ So also

ported by Dr. Thomson, where nature had provided against the extravasation of bile from the substance of the liver into the cavity of the abdomen, by the means of newly formed adhesions of considerable extent. (Military Surgery, p. 344.) See also Cooper's Surgical Dictionary.

* A case is related by Mr. Ferguson, where a part of the spleen was removed with safety. (Philosophical Transactions, vol. 40, p. 425.) Two others are mentioned by Dr. Blundell, in his Physiological Researches; one on the authority of Mr. Cline, and the other on that of Dr. O'Brien. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 6, p. 404.) Dr. Dunglison (Physiology, vol. 2, p. 249,) refers to cases of recovery from wounds, related by Adelon and Sir C. Bell; and there is a similar instance of cure by Dr. Powell, in American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 1, p. 481.

Fatal cases are related by Dr. Abercrombie; by Dr. Ingalls, Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 296; by Dr. Tuthill, London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 304; and in Lancet, vol. 11, p. 534, occurring in Guy's Hospital; and American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 7, p. 549, from Rust's Magazine.

All these, except the last, occurred from falls or severe blows; in that, a woman long afflicted with intermittent fever, was, in a quarrel with her husband, struck by him with a long elastic switch, and died in two hours. There was no mark of violence externally, though the blow was given over the region of the spleen, and on dissection, that organ was seen ruptured. It, however, and the liver were so soft, that a slight pressure sufficed to tear them. The man was acquitted from these circumstances.

† On the morning of the 1st of January of the present year, (1824,) three soldiers attempted to get out of Edinburgh Castle, to join the riot with which the new year is uniformly ushered in by the people of Scotland, but mistook their way in the dark, and precipitated themselves over the perpendicular side of the rock. They were found dead the next morning, and the livers of the whole of them were found, on dissection, to be lacerated.

DUNLOP.

A rupture of both the liver and *pancreas*, originating from a blow on the ribs by the wheels of a stage-coach, is mentioned in the Lancet, vol. 12, p. 334. A fatal case of rupture of the liver, from a fall from a wagon, and where death followed in fourteen hours, is given by Dr. J. Green, of Lowell, American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 6, p. 539. Another fatal case in 52 hours, from a wheel passing over the abdomen, is related in Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 2, p. 76.

‡ A successful case of treating a severe wound of the kidney, was related to me by my friend, Dr. Knox, of Edinburgh. A boy, at the Cape of Good Hope, received a deep wound in the left kidney from a butcher's knife, which was thrown at him. He was brought to Dr. Knox, who caused him to be placed and retained in such a position, that the wound should be the most depending part of the body. In a short time he made a complete recovery. There are instances of death arising from slight blows on the kidney, where it contains a calculus. A gentleman in India was tried for the murder of his servant, whom he killed by a blow on the loins,—on its being proved that the kidney contained a calculus, the ragged points of which had punctured the bloodvessels, he was acquitted.

DUNLOP.

with wounds of the ureters. Wounds of the bladder would not seem to be even very dangerous, if we look at the success which ordinarily attends the operation of lithotomy. They may, however, prove hazardous from the effusion of its contents, or the injury of a bloodvessel.* Wounds of the neck and sphincters of the bladder, are apt to leave incontinence of urine; and when this does occur, it should be stated in the report. Wounds of the uterus are dangerous in proportion to the hæmorrhage that follows, and the symptoms that supervene. If that organ be impregnated, the danger is of course increased.†

A case, which the narrator supposes to have been a wound of the kidney, and which was cured, is given by Dr. Borthwick. (*Annals of Medicine*, vol. 4, p. 466.) Hennen also relates of an officer who was wounded by a musket ball in that region, and who suffered long, but finally passed with his urine, a piece of cloth. (*Military Surgery*, p. 330.) He adds, however, that the cases on record of recoveries after wounds of the kidney are not numerous.

Fatal cases of rupture of the kidney from blows, are mentioned by Mr. Laidlaw, in *London Medical and Physical Journal*: *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 11, p. 199, and by Bransby Cooper, *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 24, p. 144; by Dr. Kirkbride, of Philadelphia, *American Jour. of Med. Sciences*, vol. 15, p. 359.

* Fatal cases of rupture of the bladder from external violence, are given by Cloquet, *North-American Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 5, p. 231; by Dewar, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 31, p. 86.—in his remarks on this case, Dr. Craigie refers to all the instances on record; and by Dupuytren. This last case occurred at the Hotel Dieu, and although pronounced by Dupuytren to be a ruptured bladder, was doing well; when, from some imprudence in eating, peritonitis came on, and he died on the seventeenth day. On dissection, marks of adhesion were seen between the intestines and bladder. This is a very remarkable case. (*American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 12, p. 535.)

“When the bladder is penetrated in any part of its parietes, covered with peritoneum, it is usually mortal.” Larrey.

† “A medical friend of mine related to me the following case: When in Ceylon, he was called to see the wife of a sergeant, who had received a stab in the side with a knife, wounding the uterus, she being then in the eighth month of her pregnancy; and on asking her how she got hurt she said, that in carrying out some knives which she had been cleaning, her foot slipped, and she let them fall and fell on the top of them, when one of them entered her side and produced the wound, of which she soon afterwards died. She had, however, told some of her companions, the women of the regiment, that it was her husband who had inflicted the wound; and as it was known that they did not live on the happiest terms, this excited suspicion, and the husband was ordered for trial. On dissection it appeared, that the wound had entered from above and gone downwards, which could not well have happened had she been wounded in the manner she described to the surgeon. From circumstantial proof it was like to have gone hard with the prisoner, but he was let off on the evidence of one of the surgeons, who, when interrogated on the subject, said *that the wound was not necessarily mortal*. I have since learned the private history of the jury in this case; it is as follows: The Ceylon jury consists of thirteen; of these, one declined voting, six were of opinion that it was manslaughter, and six wished to bring it in murder. In this state they sat for some hours, till at last, one of those that were for the severer sentence relented, and a verdict of manslaughter was given.” DUNLOP.

In all these instances of wounds of the abdomen, the danger is aggravated from extravasation, and this again is increased according to the nature of the fluid, which may be either blood, chyle, bile, fæcal matter, or urine. An extravasation of blood is often within the power of the surgeon, but its consequences are, however, always to be dreaded. The other evacuations can scarcely, if ever, except in the case of the urine, be remedied by means of operations, and are hence very generally mortal.*

Wounds of the testicles are dangerous, particularly if they have been contused or injured by a sharp-pointed instrument. Their division, indeed, by a cutting instrument may be mortal, unless the subsequent hæmorrhage be speedily prevented. The same remark applies to wounds of the penis; but in other respects, injuries of this organ are not to be deemed dangerous. Wounds of the female organs are often highly dangerous, from the profuse hæmorrhage that ensues.†

* "The complete effusions of bile, urine, and fæculent matter, prove uniformly fatal, by their quality inducing a destructive inflammation." (Travers on Injuries of the Intestines, London edit. p. 72.) It has been proposed to avert the evils arising from these fluids remaining in the cavities, by removing them by puncturing, as is practised in dropsical cases; and this I could suppose may be practicable in some cases, as where any very fluid liquid is to be got out; water, for instance, or serum, may be drawn off by puncturing at the lower part of a cavity where it may be lodged; but in other instances, there would be but little to hope for from the operation. Bile, urine, fæces, and chyle, are highly irritating in their nature; and though, which is very doubtful, we were enabled to remove them from the cavity, we should find it impossible to command the wounded gall bladder, biliary duct, kidney, ureter or intestine, from which they proceed, so that the operation would only be inflicting pain without any rational hope of success, as they would be renewed as fast as they were removed; and as for blood, unless the puncture was made instantly, it would most likely coagulate, and in that form it would be impossible to get it through a small punctured hole; making a large incision is, of course, quite out of the question; and blood, if likely to find its way out at all, will do so through the hole through which the wound was inflicted.

DUNLOP.

† Two interesting cases are related by Mr. Watson, of Edinburgh. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 85.) In both, there had been an incision into the labia pudendi, evidently with a cutting instrument, and either a razor or a knife. Death followed in each after a very few hours. The murderer was convicted in one case, and in the other, only escaped because the medical witnesses stated that it was *possible*, but *very improbable*, that the wound might have been occasioned by falling on glass, or a sharp body. The wound was not lacerated, nor penetrating, but a clean incision; and it is evident, in order to inflict it as supposed in the defence, that "the female must have sat down upon a piece of glass standing erect, and her clothes must have been out of the way, as they were not cut." All this, too, must have happened on a pair of stairs.

It is remarkable, that in both cases, the murderers were the first to call medical aid, probably supposing that the hæmorrhage would be attributed to flooding.

The extent and variety of injuries that the abdomen and the viscera contained in it may receive, call for all the skill of the surgeon, and his judgment will be frequently exercised in deciding on the fatality or danger of wounds of this part of the system.

Wounds of the extremities are to be decided upon according to their nature; but the majority of them are not dangerous. Of simple wounds, I have already spoken, and it is sufficient to add, that when the integuments and first layer of muscular fibres only are wounded, they will heal without difficulty. The presence of syphilis and scrofula may, however, cause their degenerating into ulcers: and it must also be noticed, that wounds of the extremities, in which the muscular fibres are transversely divided, will take a long time to heal. Contusion also may increase the inflammation, or induce suppuration. Wounds of tendons are generally tedious, and when cured, are often followed by a loss of substance, and a want of mobility in the parts. Compound fractures are sometimes hazardous—as also fractures near articulations, or of parts surrounded by large masses of muscles. Comminuted fractures are extremely tedious in their cure. Finally, fractures in young persons, and in those who are in good health, are more readily healed, than in old persons, valetudinarians and pregnant women. Wounds complicated with dislocations, sometimes induce alarming symptoms, as also those in which an important nerve is divided. The prognosis, however, is favorable, unless serious symptoms supervene on the disease, and which are referable to it. Wounds of the arteries and veins are not at the present day considered dangerous by modern surgeons, if timely aid be afforded; but under other circumstances, a wound of a large artery may prove fatal. The system may be injured, or so much blood may have been lost, as to render assistance of little value.* It is extremely rare, that wounds of the veins prove dangerous, except the brachial

* The following case may also occur: “J. Denton was indicted in September, 1813, at the Old Bailey, for the murder of C. Denton. He had struck her with a knife, and she lived a month thereafter. The medical testimony stated, that the wound had nearly divided the arteries of the arm—it mortified, and she died in consequence. He was condemned and executed. (Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 6, part 2, p. 121.)

or femoral ones be wounded near the trunk. Wounds of the articulations are generally to be dreaded, and the apprehension is increased when they are complicated, as for example, with contusion, hæmorrhage or fracture.*

† “There was a very interesting case came on before the Justiciary Court, during the autumn circuit, at Glasgow, in the year 1822. A man of the name of Pace, game-keeper to Lord Blantyre, was tried for the murder of a poacher, whom he shot so severely in the left arm, that it was found necessary to amputate it above the elbow. The man died of erysipelas phlegmonoides in the right leg; and the question on the trial was, whether the erysipelas was brought on by the wound or not. Upon this question the medical men differed totally. Mr. John Burns, the most eminent surgeon in Glasgow, gave it as his opinion, that the debility caused by the wound brought on the disease of which he died. Dr. John Thomson, of Edinburgh, was of opinion that it was brought on long before he received the wound. It appeared in evidence, that the poacher had been out in the exercise of his vocation for two nights, and had slept without shelter; that during that time he had eat but little; and, above all, that he had a foul ulcer in his leg, the absorption from which undoubtedly laid the foundation of the disease before the injury was received. Under all these circumstances, what could have been the best mode of treatment in such a case, supposing he had received no wound at all? Undoubtedly, the very treatment he did receive in consequence of it—copious bleeding, light diet, being kept quiet and still; and the counter irritation of the amputation, so far from increasing the inflammation which was going on in the groin, must have acted like a blister, or a seton, in repressing and counter-acting it. This appears to me to be the rational view of the case, and in this view the jury saw it, for the prisoner was acquitted.

“There are some wounds more apt to produce serious effects in different parts of the body, than others. Thus, a cut in the adductor muscle of the thumb, (that muscle which lies in the palm of the hand,) more frequently brings on lock-jaw than an injury of equal extent any where else. While on the subject of lock-jaw, which must be looked upon as a spasmodic action of the muscular system generally, rather than a mere contraction of the temporal muscle only, which is merely a symptom of the disease, I may remark, that a predisposition to this is brought on by particular climates, especially within the tropics, which could not, *à priori*, have been expected. When the expedition sailed from England to Buenos Ayres, in 1807, in the hospitals of most of the regiments employed there, lock-jaw was a very frequent effect of a wound in any part of the body. The same troops went to the Cape of Good Hope, where no such effects ever appeared at all. The 89th regiment went from that to Ceylon, where no lock-jaw ever followed a wound; and thence to Java, where it was the cause of death in two-thirds of the wounds. Here we have four hot climates, two of them notoriously unfavourable to Europeans, and two of them the healthiest that we know of, and yet the tetanus took place in South America and Java, and was not to be found in Ceylon or the Cape; the former quite as unhealthy generally as Java can possibly be.

“A fall from a height, or a sudden blow, may produce laceration of a joint; and whenever this takes place, and terminates fatally, such an event must be attributed to bad habit of body, or the pre-existence of some irritating disease, in which case, should it be made the subject of judicial inquiry, it is the duty of both the lawyer and surgeon to make minute investigation into the patient's previous health and habits. It is seldom, however, that it comes under the investigation of a criminal court, at least in so far as its causing death; but in civil cases it is often tried, as in the upsetting of coaches, &c. There was a case of this kind recorded some time ago in the newspapers, where the plaintiff, a gentleman who had been upset in a coach, recovered £3000 damages against the defendant, a surgeon, for unskilful treatment of a dislocation of the shoulder joint, by which the plaintiff was partially deprived of the use of his right arm. In all similar cases, almost a similar verdict would be just, for

Finally, the prognostic from wounds from fire-arms is, in all cases, more serious than that of wounds from cutting instruments.*

Such are, in a short a space as possible, the various prognostics of the numerous wounds (in a medico-legal sense) to which the body is liable.† But I must again remark in this place, that these or similar rules are not to be taken as infallible guides. It is only to aid the examiner in pronouncing an opinion, that they deserve any attention, and he should rely principally on the circumstances of the case that is immediately before him. "It has indeed been argued, that it is not enough to say, that the person died of the wound, but

though there may be exceptions, yet, generally speaking, permanent lameness after a luxation (unless from disease of the bone, anchyloses have taken place after it is put in its proper position,) may be fairly attributed to mismanagement on the part of the surgeon."

DUNLOP.

* It must not be forgotten that fire-arms, loaded with powder only, may inflict dangerous, and even mortal, wounds. In answer to the question proposed to him in writing, what are the effects produced by a fire-lock charged with powder only? Dupuytren replied, that he knew a case in which a man in a quarrel was shot with such a weapon, the muzzle being close to his abdomen. His clothes and the parietes of the abdomen were lacerated, the wound penetrated the interior, and the man fell dead. He was examined, and Dupuytren was called in to decide what the piece had been charged with; whether shot, ball, or powder only. There was nothing found but the wadding. It often happens, he observes, that persons determined to commit suicide, forget, in their bewildered state, to put the ball into their pistol; and frequently wretches, who wish to shock their friends with their calamity, discharge into their mouths, pistols charged only with powder, but the effects are dreadful. The wadding traverses the palatine vault, and the sudden expansion of air from the explosion, lacerates the velum, and the lips and cheeks are torn in a radiated manner, in consequence of the excessive distention. Sometimes the lower jaw is fractured. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 7, p. 7.)

It is probable that the case of Dr. Elliot, tried at the Old Bailey in 1787, for shooting at Miss Boydell, was of this description. He fired a pistol when very near her, as she was walking. Part of her clothes were burnt, and a surgeon swore that she had two contusions below the shoulder blade, which corresponded with the mark on the gown. The jury found him guilty of shooting, but *they did not find that there was ball*. On this, he was acquitted.

There is another point connected with this subject, which deserves further inquiry. It is the nature of burns caused by the explosion of gunpowder. Mr. Lonsdale has suggested that the presence of particles of the powder in an *unexploded* state, under the skin (as is often seen) is owing to the discharge from some firearms. He has repeatedly noticed severe injuries from the explosion of gunpowder laying free, but in no one instance of this, were any particles left in the skin. May not the resistance offered to its expansion in the other case be the cause? (London Medical Gazette, vol. 11, p. 696.)

† The authorities on which this section is founded, are Bohn, Foderé and Mahon. The two last are in many respects a copy of the former. I have also consulted Samuel Cooper's Surgical Works, Dorsey's Surgery, Charles Bell's Operative Surgery, Sir Astley Cooper's Lectures, Larrey's Memoirs, and Hennen's Military Surgery, together with Metzger and Belloc, and the dissertations in Schlegel.

that the wound must be characterized as mortal, thus taking advantage of the systematic arrangement in books on surgery, and deducing the conclusion, that when a man dies of a wound that is not there arranged as mortal, it must have originated from bad treatment, or misconduct, or irregularity on the part of the patient.* But the insufficiency of these divisions has been often proved. Thus "in a case of one John Shaw, at the Scotch bar, three physicians and two surgeons swore, that by the rules of their prognostics, the wounds received by James Houston were mortal, whereas Houston was alive, and the plaintiff in the very cause in which these gentlemen gave this testimony."†

When a surgeon is called on to examine a wound, the effects of which may become the subject of a criminal trial,‡ he should ascertain, 1st, whether it has been already dressed, or if some surgeon has not been attending to it; and 2d,

* Lawyers are very apt to push the question as to the mortality of wounds to a considerable length, and by this means often embarrass the medical witness. I recommend the answer of the surgeon, who deposed, on the trial of Count Koningsmark for the murder of Mr. Thynne, to the notice of the latter. Mr. Thynne was shot with a blunderbuss, and Mr. Hobbs, the surgeon, swore that he had examined the body after death—that four bullets had entered it—"that they tore his guts, and wounded his liver, stomach and his gall—wounded his great guts and his small guts, broke one of his ribs, and wounded the great bone below."

Sir Francis Withens. Did he die of those wounds?

Mr. Hobbs. Yes, he did die of those wounds.

Mr. Williams. Did you apprehend them all mortal, or any, or which of them?

Mr. Hobbs. I believe there never was a wound, but it might prove mortal. (Hugrave's State Trials, vol. 3, p. 473.)

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 339.

‡ I mention the following case, as it may be important for the surgeon to be aware of the doctrine contained in it. In the case of *The King v. Salisbury*, the prisoner was committed to Newgate for stabbing a gentleman with a knife, so that his life was despaired of. She moved that a physician and surgeon of her own nominating, might be permitted to be present at the dressing of his wound, so as to be able to satisfy the court that he was out of danger, in order that they might bail her. *Sed per curiam.* There never was a motion of this nature, especially so early as this. The course is, for the friends of the party injured, to lay his condition before the court, when they oppose the bailing; if they do not do it, we may order such an attendance for our own satisfaction, but at present the defendant has no right to demand it. (1st Strange's Reports, p. 547.)

In *The Commonwealth v. Trask*, the court said, "If a person be imprisoned for dangerously wounding another, who happens to be in a languishing condition, the court will order that the offender be kept in prison until it shall appear that the wound be mortal." (Massachusetts Reports, vol. 15, p. 277.)

On the other hand, I may be permitted to advise magistrates not to grant warrants for committing a man to jail on the mere oath of the injured person. The attending surgeon should certify to the imminence of the case. Mr. Dease (p. 105) mentions some deplorable cases from inattention to this.

whether the situation of the wounded person allows of an examination. Both of these are important, as much may depend on the skill and care with which the first dressing has been made; and again, should an examination take place while the patient is in a feeble state, and death follow during it, popular opinion will certainly attach great blame to the surgeon. The juridical examination of a wounded person must also be deferred in some cases, where the point or part of an instrument remains in the wound. Here a consultation is frequently required to determine on the propriety of its removal, and the question has often arisen, whether the death of the patient will not be hastened by immediately withdrawing it.

Let us, however, suppose the wounded person to be in a fit situation for the surgical and juridical examination. It is then necessary, before proceeding to it, to ascertain the nature and shape of the instrument by which the injury was inflicted. Inquiry should also be made as to the relative situation of the parties, at the moment of the wound—their respective stature and position. The examiner cannot be too minute, and he should be cautious in not making any observations on the nature of the wound, before he has fully satisfied his own mind, lest they may hereafter be used to the disadvantage of his evidence. The form, length, breadth, depth, and direction of the injury, together with all the other circumstances already mentioned, should be noticed, and a detailed summary of the whole should then be drawn up in the form of a report. I must, however, caution concerning the impropriety, and indeed inutility of declaring any wound, concerning which there can be the least doubt, absolutely mortal. All that can be required by judicial officers, is a declaration, that in the opinion of the examiner, the life of the wounded person is in danger from the injury he has received; and on this, they are sufficiently enabled to take all the precautionary steps that may be necessary.* During the illness, it will be proper to

* There is one circumstance, which strongly illustrates the propriety of this advice, and which I place here to be distinctly understood. It is, that not unfrequently, mortal injuries are inflicted without any external marks being present. Chaussier mentions an instance of a person crushed by a carriage, on whom no swelling or bruise could be discovered. Dr. Wagner, in his Annual Report for 1833, of the School of State Medicine in Prussia, relates the case of a child run over and killed,

keep a journal, and if the event prove fatal, we have a safe guide to resort to in dissection. The wounded parts must be minutely examined, and from them a just conclusion can be drawn whether the injury was the cause of death.*

It is not necessary in this place to state the distinctions that exist in our law, and that of England, respecting the crime of killing, since they relate to the intent, and can have but a slight bearing on the nature of wounds. There is one English statute, however, which deserves mention. It was passed in the reign of James I. and declares, "that the thrusting or stabbing another, who has not a weapon drawn, or who hath not then first stricken the party stabbing, *so that he die thereof within six months after*," shall be adjudged murder, though done upon sudden provocation.† In the state of New-York, the same statute was enacted, and it contained the same provision as to time, (*six months*.) It is to be deemed murder, "although it cannot be proved that the same was done of malice aforethought."‡

This is, however, omitted in the Revised Statutes, enacted in 1828, and therefore is no longer in force. The Revisers in recommending this alteration, and indeed in having no restriction as to time, remark, that the presumption on which it

and in whom the spleen and kidney were crushed, while no external injury, except a very slight excoriation, was observable on the body. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 13, p. 974.) For further instances, see the same Journal, vol. 15, p. 668, 727, 729. In all these (four in number,) either the liver, spleen, lungs, or intestines, were ruptured. Yet the surface of the body presented little, if any, marks of injury. The explanation doubtless is to be found in the yielding nature of the walls of the abdomen.

Although these cases have generally been the result of accident, yet it is *possible* that similar ones may be matters of legal investigation.

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 402 to 432. I must briefly advert to one possible case, which may also occur, viz: that of a man wounded while labouring under a fatal disease. A trial involving this point, was held at the Hereford assizes, (England,) in 1830. A consumptive and intemperate person was struck severely on the head and robbed. There were four contused wounds found. He recovered, however, from these, but ever after complained of pain in the head, more or less, until his death, which took place in four months, with the ordinary symptoms of consumption,

The question was, whether death had been hastened by the injuries. The surgeons differed in their testimony. Some state the brain to have been perfectly healthy; others, that it was soft, moist and discoloured, and through this difference, the prisoner escaped from the charge of murder. The lungs were greatly diseased. (Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 2, p. 228.)

On a recent indictment for murder in England, where the death was alleged to have been caused by a wound, it was ruled as not necessary to describe its length, breadth, or depth. *Rex v. Tomlinson*, 6 Carrington and Payne's Reports, p. 370.

† Blackstone, vol. 4, p. 193.

‡ Revised Laws, vol. 1, p. 67.

was founded, is unsound, viz: "that if the person wounded does not die within the given time, it must have arisen from some other cause. Common experience teaches the contrary."

A provision as to a specific period of time, during which death must follow in order to constitute the crime of murder, appears, however, to have entered into the laws of various countries. Thus, among the Lombards, the criminal was held guilty, if the individual injured died within a year.* In Prussia, on the contrary, the *practice* is, that the death must take place within nine days, although the *penal code* of that country contains no directions respecting this subject.† In France it is fixed at forty days,‡ while in England, the individual was held amenable for the consequences during a year and a day.§ All these restrictions are evidently improper, since death may follow at a longer or shorter period of time, and be strictly and indisputably traced to the wound in question. It is a much safer mode to look at the intent, and proportion the punishment accordingly.

There are some adjudications on record which it may be well to mention, from their connexion with the subjects canvassed in the present and preceding sections.

It is stated by Starkie, that "it is sufficient to constitute murder, that the party dies of the wound given by the prisoner, although the wound was not *originally mortal*, but became so in consequence of neglect or unskilful treatment, but it is otherwise where the death arises not from the wound, but from unskilful applications or operations used for the purpose of curing it.||

On a recent trial, where an individual was indicted for manslaughter, by a blow of a hammer, judge J. Parke observed, "it is said that the deceased was in a bad state of health, but

* Bohn, p. 101.

† Metzger, p. 325.

‡ Ballard, p. 325.

§ Blackstone, vol. 4, p. 197. This would also seem to be the present law in North-Carolina, as in the *State v. Orrel*, the court said, "when the death does not ensue within a year and a day after a wound is inflicted, the law presumes that it proceeded from some other cause, hence an indictment upon which it does not appear that the death happened within that time, is fatally defective." (1 Devereux's North-Carolina Reports, p. 139, quoted in the *American Jurist*, vol. 7, p. 366.)

Starkie on Evidence, vol. 2, p. 946.

that is perfectly immaterial, as, if the prisoner was so unfortunate as to *accelerate* her death, he must answer for it.”*

The rule in Scotland does not appear to be so strict, although the general principle is maintained. Thus, it is not a good plea, if a person receives a gun-shot wound at some remote place in the country, where no surgeon skilled in such wounds resides, and of which wound the person dies, although the practitioner there had exercised his best knowledge. (Case of Edgar, 1747.) And again, although the patient languishes, and death does not ensue even for weeks or months, yet if the wound be in itself severe, and goes on from worse to worse, so that the patient is plainly consumed by it as a disease, it is the same as if he died on the spot.† But in the case of Angus Cameron, 1811, the deceased was an infirm and deformed lad, who died in consequence of a kick from the prisoner in the groin, where he had a rupture. The prisoner was ignorant of this, and he was only sentenced to six months imprisonment. So also in another case, a blow on the shoulder dislocated the joint, and death ensued, but it was shown that the deceased was scrofulous and unhealthy, and the injury unskillfully treated. The verdict was culpable homicide only.‡

3. Of *Mutilation*.

It will readily occur to the reader that there may be many wounds, which though not mortal in their nature, are still incurable, and these may either leave permanent deformity, or incapacitate or weaken one or more of the functions of the body. Laws directed to the punishment of such injuries, have accordingly been enacted in various countries, and as some are in force in this state, the propriety of a brief notice is evident.

I will commence by mentioning those in force in France, as there is a uniformity between the English law and our own.

The code of 1791, established a scale, founded on the proportionate magnitude of the injury. Whenever an individual was so wounded as to be unable to apply himself to any manual labour for the space of forty days, the criminal was di-

* Rex v. Martin, 5 Carrington and Payne, p. 128.

† Baron Hume's Commentaries, vol. 1, p. 269, 271.

‡ Alison's Principles of Criminal Law of Scotland, p. 98, 100.

rected to suffer two years imprisonment. Three years were appointed in case the arm, leg, or thigh, was broken; and four years, when there was an absolute loss of sight in one eye, a complete loss of the use of a member, or a mutilation of some part of the head or body. It was extended to six years, provided there was an absolute blindness, or a total inability to use either both arms or both legs.*

The code now in force does not contain these distinctions, but leaves to the judges the power of varying the period of imprisonment. It is, however, in one respect, more severe than the former, as it prescribes imprisonment generally against the individual who shall, either by wounds or blows, injure a person so that he is ill, or unable to labour, for the space of twenty days thereafter. And this imprisonment is to be not less than five, nor more than ten years.† One species of mutilation is, however, particularly noticed, viz: castration. It subjects the criminal to hard labour for life, and if it should prove fatal within forty days, he is to suffer death. Outrages against decency are alone to excuse from this punishment.‡

In the English law, the term *Mayhem* is applied to the cases now under notice. This is defined by Blackstone, to be "the violently depriving another of the use of such of his members, as may render him the less able in fighting either to defend himself or annoy his adversary. And therefore the cutting off, or disabling, or weakening a man's hand or finger, or striking out his eye or fore tooth, or depriving him of those parts, the loss of which in animals abates their cou-

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 427.

† Ibid. p. 428, Penal Code, art. 309. Huard in his valuable dissertation on wounds, objects to the above enactment. He considers it too severe, since there are some lesions that cannot be cured in twenty days, as fractures, violent contusions, and even sprains, and yet the violence may not have been more, or even as much, than that which caused a wound which healed in twenty days. He urges as a strong objection to these specifications of time, that there may be many circumstances apart from the violence itself, which may delay the cure, and mentions several of those which we have enumerated in the first section of this chapter. The law in his country, he adds, is defective in not referring to the intent. Orfila and other French authors, agree in this opinion. There has been an alteration of the law, (passed in 1824,) so far as relates to the degree of punishment. The court may reduce it if they think proper. The obnoxious specification of the crime, however, remains. (Orfila's *Legons*, 2d edit. vol. 2, p. 422.)

‡ Foderé, vol. 3, p. 244. By the 231st article of the Penal Code, if any violence be offered to a magistrate in the exercise of his duty, so as to cause effusion of blood, wounds or sickness, the punishment is imprisonment, and if death follows within forty days, it is declared a capital offence.

rage, are held to be mayhems. But the cutting off his ear or nose, or the like, are not held to be mayhems at common law, because they do not weaken, but only disfigure him."

"By the common law also, mayhem has for a long time been only punishable with a fine and imprisonment, unless perhaps the offence of mayhem by castration, which all our old writers held to be felony; and this, although the mayhem was committed upon the highest provocation."*

Subsequent statutes have, however, more clearly defined the crime and its punishment. By a statute passed in the 5th year of Henry IV. it was enacted, that the beating, wounding or robbing a man, and then cutting out his *tongue*, or putting out his *eyes*, shall be considered a felony. Next, was the statute 37 Henry the VIII. which directs that if a man shall maliciously and unlawfully cut off the *ear* of any of his majesty's subjects, he shall not only forfeit treble damages in a civil suit, but ten pounds by way of fine to the king, which was his criminal amercement. After this, was passed the Coventry act, in the reign of Charles II. and so called from its being occasioned by an assault on Sir John Coventry in the street, and slitting his nose, in revenge (as was supposed) for some obnoxious words uttered by him in parliament. This ordains, that if any man shall, of malice aforethought, and by lying in wait, unlawfully cut out or disable the *tongue*, put out an *eye*, slit the *nose*, cut off a *nose* or *lip*, or cut off or disable any *limb* or *member* of any other person, with an *intent to maim or to disfigure* him, he shall be deemed a felon without benefit of clergy.†

A more recent act was passed in the 43d of George III. All wilful and malicious maiming, stabbing or cutting, with

* The ancient Anglo-Saxon laws contained a regular scale of fines for personal injuries of this description. The loss of a leg or eye subjected the offender to a fine of fifty shillings; a wound that caused lameness, thirty shillings; one that caused deafness, twenty-five shillings; piercing the nose was punished with a fine of nine shillings; a front tooth was compensated for by six shillings, and an eye tooth by four shillings. Money, it must be remembered, was in those days one hundred times more valuable than at present. (Edinburgh Encyclopædia, vol. 2, p. 94, American edition.)

For these in detail, as well as the laws of the ancient Lombards, the Angles and the Salic law on the punishments for mutilation, see Dunham's history of Europe during the middle ages, (Lardner's Cyclopædia,) vol. 1, p. 14; vol. 2, p. 134; vol. 3, p. 65, 72, 130.

† Blackstone, vol. 4, p. 205, 206, 207.

intent to murder, rob, *maim, disfigure or disable, or to do some grievous bodily harm*, is declared felony.

Again, by a law passed in 9th of George IV. chapter 31, it is enacted that if any person shall maliciously shoot at another, or cut, stab or wound, with intent to maim, disfigure or disable, or to do some other grievous bodily harm, it shall be deemed felony in all cases, where, if death had ensued, it would have amounted to murder.* Some interesting decisions have been made in England under these respective laws, and as they are, in a degree, applicable to our own statute, I will mention a few.

In 1721, Mr. Coke, a gentleman of the bar, and one Woodburne were indicted, the one for hiring and abetting, the other for actually slitting the nose of Mr. Crispe, the brother-in-law of Coke. On the trial, Mr. Sturgeon, the surgeon, swore that there were several wounds on the face, one wound divided the right side of the nostril, and made an oblique cross over the wound, and ended near the right under jaw. The nose was cut from without into the nostril, the edge of the nose was not cut through, but there was a cut or slit in it, that went through. Mr. Coke, with great effrontery, said, that his aim was to murder, and not to maim or disfigure. When the verdict of guilty came in, he asked whether the nose could be said to be slit, within the meaning of the statute, when the edge of it was not cut through. To this, the lord chief justice (Sir Peter King) replied: "It is true, the edge of the nose was not slit, but the cut was athwart the nose, which cut separated the flesh of the nose, and cut it quite through the nostril. This I take, he added, to be a slitting of the nose, and *the surgeon swore the nose was slit.*" Both Coke and Woodburne were executed.†

In the case of one Carrol, at the Old Bailey sessions, in July, 1765, it appeared that he had struck the prosecutor,

* It is stated in the London Law Magazine, (vol. 1, p. 130, 132,) that Lord Lansdowne's act, as this last (9 George IV.) is called, originated in an attempt of one Howard to murder with a *blunt* weapon. Lord Ellenborough's act (43 George III.) was restricted to shooting, stabbing or cutting. It is urged against the present law, that it is too extensive; that it may be construed to include common broils, and an ordinary assault and battery may be made a felony and be punished with death.

† Hargrave, vol. 6, p. 211.

(Mr. Kirby) with a razor bladed knife across the nose and eyes, and upon examination, it appeared that the two great bloodvessels in the forehead were divided, that there was a large transverse wound across the nose, so wide open, that the bone was visible. It began from the right, and went across the eyelids and across the nose. The muscles of the nose were cut through, and it proceeded to the left eyelid, and terminated at the temple. A nerve was also cut. It was stated in evidence, that in many old writers on surgery, such wounds were called slits, but that slit is not the word made use of now. The word *slit* is understood as synonymous to the word *cut*, but the idea which was formerly conveyed by the word *slit* is now expressed in speaking technically, by the word *divided*. The jury found the prisoner guilty, but it was questioned whether a transverse cut was a slitting, within the meaning of the act, *the wound not having perforated the nostril*. It was accordingly referred to the judges, who held that the offence was properly proved, and the prisoner was accordingly executed.*

Lastly, one Tickner was tried in 1778, at the Old Bailey, under the same act, for injury done to William Jacob. There were several wounds on various parts of the body, but the cut on the nose had divided the integuments in an oblique direction. It went down to the bone, but not through the bones of the nostrils, nor did it penetrate to the nostrils, and was rather a scratch, than a slit. It was, however, sufficient to leave a mark visible for some time. The prisoner was convicted, but sergeant Glynn ordered the execution to be respited, until the opinion of the twelve judges could be procured, whether this conviction was proper within the meaning of the Coventry act. They were of opinion that the conviction was right.†

Under the act of the 43d of George the Third, for malicious shooting or cutting, there have been the following adjudications:

* East's Treatise, p. 399. Lawyer's Magazine, vol. 1, p. 202.

† Lawyer's Magazine, vol. 1, p. 203. William Lee was tried at the Old Bailey, in 1763, for attempting to cut his wife's throat with a razor while asleep. The wound was three inches in length, and quite across, but did not prove mortal. This was held not to be an offence within the Coventry act.

A striking on the face with the sharp claw of a hammer, by which the face was cut, was held to be within the act. *Atkinson's Case*, York Assizes, 1806.

So also cutting part of the skull with an instrument adapted to the purpose of prying doors open; a piece of the skull, according to the evidence, having been taken out as if sawed out; not *broken out*, but *cut out*. *Rex v. Hayward* or *Harwood*, 1805. The jury found that the intent was not to *cut*, but to *break or lacerate* the head. The judges held that this conviction was right, and the prisoner was executed.

In *Adams' case*, Old Bailey Sessions, 1808, and afterwards before the judges, it was held, that the striking with a square iron bar was not within the statute; because there the wound was not an incised one, but contused and lacerated.*

Under the 9th of George IV. as quoted, I find the following decisions:

A man was struck with a hammer, his collar bone was broken, and his back and loins bruised. It was urged that was not a wounding, as the *skin was not broken*. The judge left the case to the jury, but reserved the point; and the judges agreed that this was not a wounding under the act.†

Again, a wound caused by throwing a sledge-hammer, is a wound within the statute, although the hammer was blunt and not an instrument calculated to inflict a wound.‡ And even if the skin be broken with a bludgeon, and blood be drawn, this is a wounding.§ If a person wound by kicking the skin off one he intends to rob, he is punishable under this act, if the jury find that his act is either to disable, or to do grievous bodily harm.||

In the state of New-York, the law at present is as follows:

Every person who, from premeditated design, evinced by laying in wait for the purpose, or in any other manner; or with intention to kill or commit any felony; shall cut out or disable the tongue; or put out an eye; or slit the lip, or slit or destroy the nose; or cut off or disable any limb or member

* Starkie on Evidence, vol. 2, p. 924.

† 4 Carrington and Payne, p. 381. *Rex v. Wood*.

‡ Ibid, p. 446. *Rex v. Withers*.

§ Ibid. p. 558. *Rex v. Payne*.

|| 5 Ibid. p. 504. *Rex v. Shadbolt*.

of another, shall, on conviction, be imprisoned in a state prison for a term not less than seven years.*

With respect to the other states, the following classification of offences may probably be most satisfactory.

Cutting out or disabling the tongue, is specified in the laws of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, Delaware, Vermont, Illinois, New-Hampshire, New-Jersey, Tennessee, Missouri, Georgia and Michigan. *Disabling the tongue* is only mentioned in the laws of Indiana.

Putting out an eye, is made a crime in the laws of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Rhode-Island, Delaware, Vermont, Ohio, Illinois, New-Hampshire, New-Jersey, Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia, Massachusetts and Michigan. Putting out the eye or eyes of another, so that the person is thereby made blind, is particularly specified as a higher offence in Connecticut, and the punishment is imprisonment for life in the state prison. Pulling out or putting out an eye while fighting, is mentioned in the laws of Pennsylvania, Rhode-Island and Georgia.

Slitting the nose, ear or lip, is mentioned in the laws of Connecticut, Illinois, Georgia, New-Jersey, Michigan, Delaware, Indiana, Tennessee, Ohio, New-Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Slitting the nose or lip, in Missouri.

Slitting the nose, in Pennsylvania and Rhode-Island.

Cutting off the nose, or ear, or lip, in Pennsylvania, Rhode-Island, Delaware, Indiana, Tennessee, Ohio, New-Hampshire, Michigan, New-Jersey, Missouri and Massachusetts.

Biting off the nose, ear or lip, in Delaware, Indiana, Tennessee and Ohio.

Cutting off, biting or slitting the tongue, in Ohio.

Cutting off all or any of the genitals, in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Tennessee, Delaware and North-Carolina. In the two last states, this crime is punished with death.

Cutting or biting off, or disabling any limb or member, with an intention to maim or disfigure, is enumerated in the laws of Connecticut, New-Hampshire, Michigan, New-Jersey, Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia and Massachusetts.

* Revised Statutes, 1828, vol. 2, p. 664.

Cutting off or disabling any limb, in Rhode-Island, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Maiming any person, in Delaware. *Disabling* any limb or member, in Illinois.

Branding any person, with intent to murder or kill, disfigure or maim, in New-Jersey and Michigan.

Shooting or stabbing with any weapon, with intent to kill or maim, in Tennessee and Missouri.*

* Laws of Connecticut, 1830, p. 254. Laws of Massachusetts, 1807, vol. 3, p. 263. With reference to this state, see also the case of the Commonwealth v. Newell and others. (Massachusetts Reports, vol. 7, p. 245.) Laws of Rhode-Island, 1798, p. 589. Laws of Vermont, 1825, p. 254. Revised Laws of Illinois, 1833, p. 178. Laws of New-Hampshire, 1830, p. 137. Laws of New-Jersey, 1833, p. 237. Statute Laws of Tennessee, 1831, vol. 1, p. 251. Laws of Missouri, 1825, vol. 1, p. 283. Digest of the laws of Georgia, 1822, p. 349. Laws of Michigan, p. 207. Revised Laws of Indiana, 1831, p. 183. Revised Laws of Delaware, 1829, p. 128. Laws of Delaware, 1833, p. 262. Laws of Pennsylvania, 1803, vol. 5, p. 3. For the laws of Ohio, see American Quarterly Review, vol. 10, p. 41. In North-Carolina, (session of 1831, '32,) castration with intent to murder or maim, was made a capital crime. (American Jurist, vol. 8, p. 197.)

CHAPTER XVI.

POISONS.

Definition of a poison. Resistance to poisons sometimes observed in man and animals.

Modes in which poisons may be introduced into the system—variety as to the rapidity of their effects—laws founded on this circumstance. Division of poisons into irritant—narcotic—narcotico-acrid. 1. SIGNS OF POISON IN THE LIVING BODY. Symptoms of the irritant poisons—the narcotic—the narcotico-acrid. Causes that may modify or vary the progress of symptoms. Preliminary directions for the analysis of suspected substances—administration of the supposed poison to animals—mode—value of the evidence thus obtained. Of poisoning during illness—value of moral evidence. Of the poisons of the ancients, and what have been called slow poisons. Of poisons administered to several persons at the same time—variety of effects. Of poisoning as the result of suicide or homicide—pretended poisoning. Diseases and symptoms that may be mistaken for the effects of irritant poisons—idiosyncrasy—distension or rupture of the stomach, intestines, and other abdominal organs—cholera—inflammations—perforations—hamatemesis—colic. Of narcotic poisons—apoplexy—epilepsy. 2. SIGNS OF POISON ON THE DEAD BODY. Danger of neglecting a medico-legal dissection—cases. Preservation of the contents of the stomach and intestines. Appearances on dissection from the irritant poisons—narcotic—narcotico-acrid—variety in these. Introduction of poison after death—appearances indicative of this. Appearances and diseases that may be mistaken for the effects of poisons. Vascularity of the stomach after death—how discriminated from the effects of inflammation. Ulcers or perforations of the stomach and intestines, through the action of the gastric juice, or as a consequence of disease—how these are to be distinguished from perforations induced by irritant poisons. Chemical examination—the poison cannot always be detected—being removed by vomiting—absorption—decomposition—should then be sought for in the solids. How far putrefaction renders their detection impossible—General outline of treatment—antidotes—removal of the poison by vomiting—the stomach pump—cupping glasses. Statistics of poisoning in France.

“THE means of ascertaining the traces of poisons, either on the living or the dead body, is one of the most important subjects in legal medicine, and its importance is only equalled by its difficulty.”

I propose to consider the subject under three general divisions.

1. The signs of poison in the living body.
2. The signs of poison on the dead body.
3. The various kinds of substances that may produce, or have produced these dangerous and fatal effects.

Previous to an examination of these, a few preliminary observations will be proper.

What is a poison? The ancients considered every thing as poisonous, that produced malignant symptoms, and attacked directly what we style the vital principle. Thus, miasma was with them a poison, and their remedies, or antidotes, were accordingly directed to the support and cherishing of the vital heat, and to increase action throughout the body. Hence also the name of alexipharmics, and the belief of driving out poison by transpiration. The common idea of a poison by the moderns, on the other hand, is that it is a substance, which, on being applied in one or other way to the human body, is capable of destroying the action of the vital functions, or of placing the solids and fluids in a situation that prevents the continuance of life. Dr. Mead's definition includes every substance, which, in small doses, can produce great changes on the living body. This is evidently too extensive, since it embraces many articles that are not regarded as poisons, and excludes others that are really so. Thus, a small quantity of bread or water has produced great changes, whilst opium or corrosive sublimate has been taken in large quantities, without injurious effects. The definition given by Foderé, although liable to criticism, is probably as unexceptionable as any that has yet been offered. He considers poisons to be those substances which are known by physicians as capable of altering or destroying, in a majority of cases, some or all of the functions necessary to life.* The great and leading object in medico-legal cases, necessary to complete the idea of a poison, is the intent with which the substance is given.

Another interesting question, is the manner in which poisons act. This has been a subject of fruitful discussion among modern physiologists, and our own country has not been wanting in ardent examiners respecting it.†

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 449.

† See Ducachet's Inaugural Dissertation on the action of poisons. Somerville's Inaugural Dissertation on the organs of absorption. (Chapman's Journal, vol. 2, p. 408.) Report of the committee of the academy of medicine, on the means by which absorption is effected. (Ibid. vol. 3, p. 232.) Dr. Milner's Experiments. Ibid. vol. 4, p. 10. Dr. Hubbard's Experiments. Ibid. vol. 4, p. 242. Drs. Lawrence and Coates' Experiments. Ibid. vol. 5, p. 327. Also Dr. Hale's Boylston Prize Dissertation.

It is not compatible with the limits of this work, to enter into a full consideration of this subject, and a brief account would only provoke criticism. The varied results obtained by different experimentalists, have inclined them respectively in favour of the bloodvessels, the nerves, or the lymphatics, as the medium by which poisons produce their effects.*

A concise notice of the consequences observed from each individual poison, will be more appropriate to the object of the work, and this will accordingly find its proper place in the third division of the subject.

The remarkable resistance that is sometimes observed to the action of poisons, also deserves an early allusion. Instances of this nature are so numerous, that a selection of the more striking, will be sufficient to illustrate the position.

Among the Hungarians, the seeds of the *Palma Christi* are often taken to the amount of thirty-six grains, without any inconvenience, and some of the French peasantry use a decoction of *colocynth* as a common purgative. The common dose of the extract of the *aconitum napellus* is one or two grains, and it is deemed dangerous to use it in larger quantities; but Foderé was consulted concerning the case of Charles IV. of Spain, who, while residing at Marseilles, was attacked with a rheumatic gout, and he recommended the medicine in question. M. Soria, the king's physician, replied, that at a former period, it had been administered for a length of time, and to such an extent, that the patient took a drachm daily, without any good or evil effects. This monarch was now sixty-two years of age, athletic, and had an excellent appetite.† The fumes of mercury, of lead, and of copper, are well known to be injurious to those who inhale them, yet no fact is better established than that of workmen resisting their effects for many years. "In the mines of Peru," says Humboldt, "from five to six thousand persons are employed in the amalgamation

* Among European writers on this subject, I may venture to mention Christison, chap. 1; Addison and Morgan on the operation of poisonous agents, London 1829; the experiments of Segalas, in Brande's Journal, vol. 21, p. 401; Dr. W. C. Henry, Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 10, p. 293; Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, Art. *Toxicology*, by Dr. Apjohn; Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 32, p. 129; Magendie's Lectures on Absorption, in Lancet, N. S. vol. 15.

† Foderé, vol. 3, p. 468.

of the minerals, or the preparatory labour. A great number of these individuals pass their lives in walking barefooted over heaps of brayed metal, moistened and mixed with muriate of soda, sulphate of iron, and oxide of mercury, by the contact of the atmosphere and the solar rays. *It is a remarkable phenomenon,*" he adds, "*to see these men enjoy the most perfect health.*"* Again, in all the Savoyard and Swiss Alps, milk is collected and kept in small copper vessels, and in Germany, preserved fruits are put into vessels of this metal, in order to give them a green colour, and all without inducing any injury.† The most astonishing of cases, however, on record, is that of the old man at Constantinople, who had been in the habit for thirty years, of swallowing enormous quantities of corrosive sublimate, until his dose came at last to be a drachm daily. He was living in 1800.‡

These exceptions to general rules are best explained on the principle of idiosyncrasy, or of habit rendering the system innoxious to their effects.§ And such extraordinary instances should, above all, never influence us in legal medicine, nor lead us to the idea, that because one person has taken a particular substance without any ill effects, it is therefore not a poison. The academy of Berlin was consulted in 1752, whether copper was a poison. They replied, that they did not consider it decidedly so, since several had taken it with impunity, either separately or mixed with food. Now, if this decision receives a general application, we may undoubtedly adduce examples of wonderful escapes from the effects of almost all noxious substances, and thus destroy the idea of poison altogether.

* Political Essay on the Kingdom of New-Spain.

† Foderé, vol. 3, p. 449.

‡ This case was first mentioned by Dr. Pouqueville. Mr. Thornton doubted the story, and criticised the name given him. Lord Byron, in the notes to his *Childe Harold*, attacked Mr. Thornton in his turn. And thus "this man (says Mr. Hobhouse) though nearly one hundred years old, was, like Partridge the almanack maker, almost reasoned out of existence by a verbal criticism, which has turned out to be incorrect." (*Hobhouse's Albania*, vol. 2, p. 945. London edition.)

Dr. Strohmayer relates of a peasant, who resided near a convent in the Tyrol, and took for a long time ten grains of arsenic daily with his food. The monks fully testify to the truth of this statement!! (*Boston Med. and Surg. Journal*, vol. 12, p. 211.)

§ The quantity of opium taken daily by the Turks, is also a striking proof of this.

There is another curious fact connected with this subject, which it is proper to mention. It is, the different effects which some substances produce on man and other animals—being noxious to the one, and innoxious to the other, and vice versa. Thus, sweet almonds are said to kill dogs, foxes and fowls—aloes is destructive to dogs and foxes—pepper to hogs, and parsley to the parrot. On the contrary, hogs feed on henbane, (*hyoscyamus*)—pheasants on stramonium, and goats on water hemlock, (*cicuta virosa*), with impunity.* Many, however, of the principal poisons produce similar results on man and other animals, and on none probably is the resemblance greater than with the dog.

Poisons may be introduced into the system in various ways: through the nose, in the form of odours—through the lungs, by inspiration—by the mouth and œsophagus, in the form of food—by the rectum, in the form of injection, and through the skin,* in some instances, (although this is denied by several physiologists,) by absorption.†

The rapidity of the action of poisons varies considerably. Concentrated hydrocyanic acid destroys an adult man, as we shall see, almost in an instant; while others take away life within an hour—a few hours—a day, or a longer period. Some, indeed, when the sufferer escapes the immediate consequences, prove fatal after months or a year; but with a sufficiently marked train of symptoms to indicate with certainty the original cause. It is on this account that a particular pe-

* *Foderé*, vol. 4, p. 203. *Mahon*, vol. 2, p. 302. Dr. Christison is disposed to doubt many of these statements.

† There are many curious accounts on record, of the mode in which poisoning was formerly supposed to be perpetrated. Thus *Zacchias* says, that Pope Clement VII. was poisoned by the smoke of a candle; and it was also thought that dresses and jewels might be impregnated with venomous matters. Queen Elizabeth was to have been poisoned, by spreading some on the pommel of the saddle. "The queen, in mounting, would transfer the ointment to her hand; with her hand, she was likely to touch her mouth or nostrils, and such was the virulence of the poison, that certain death must follow." (*Aikin's Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, American edition, vol. 2, p. 306.) There is a minute of council extant, in the hand-writing of Cecil, which contains, among other things, the following caution: "That no manner of perfume, either in apparel, or sleeves, gloves, or such like, or otherwise that shall be appointed for your majesty's savor, be presented by any stranger, or other person, but that the same be corrected by some other fume." (*Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 299.)

Of all or most of these, we may remark, that they are altogether fabulous—the suggestions of ignorance or malice.

riod has been introduced in the laws of some countries; and if the poisoned person dies within it, the criminal is to suffer punishment.

In England, it is deemed murder if the party poisoned die within the year; while in Scotland, according to the opinion of Baron Hume, it would seem, that a person might be punished, although death took place at a period indefinitely remote; provided the operation of the poison can be distinctly traced as causing it.* In the state of New-York, the law formerly was similar to the English. If the individual poisoned died within a year and a day, it was murder; if beyond that, the punishment was imprisonment in the state prison for a term not exceeding fourteen years.† This enactment is, however, omitted in the Revised Statutes; and it is now provided, that “if any person shall be convicted of having administered, or of having caused and procured to be administered, any poison to any other human being, with intent to kill such human being, and which shall have been actually taken by such being, whereof death shall not ensue, he shall be punished by imprisonment in a state prison, for a term not less than ten years.”‡

In all the states, wilful but unsuccessful attempts to destroy life by poison, are ranked among the higher crimes; but I cannot find any limitation as to time.§ In England, the adminis-

* Christison, p. 39.

† Revised Laws, vol. 1, p. 409.

‡ Revised Statutes, vol. 2, p. 665. The following are also made offences: “Mingling poison with any food, drink or medicine, with intent to kill or injure any human being; wilfully poisoning any spring, well or reservoir of water; and administering or exposing any poisonous substance, so that it should be taken by any horse, cattle or sheep.” (Ibid. p. 666, 669.) “If any physician, while in a state of intoxication, shall, without a design to effect death, administer any poison, drug or medicine, or do any other act to another person, which shall produce the death of such other, he shall be deemed guilty of manslaughter.” (Ibid. p. 662.) If under the same circumstances, a physician or any other person, prescribes either of the above, and life is endangered, it is declared a misdemeanor. (Ibid. p. 694.)

§ The following cases show, that the laws follow such as use poisons, even when the individual whom they intend to destroy does not take them, but some third person who had taken them accidentally. A., intending to kill his wife, gave her a poisoned apple, and she, being ignorant of it, gives it to a child, against whom A. never meant any harm. The child died. A. was convicted on this for murder. (Saunders’ Case, Plowden’s Reports, p. 473.) Again, if A. sends poison, intending it for B. and with intent to kill him, and it comes into the possession of C. who takes it, but does not die; A. may be indicted for a capital offence, under the 9 George IV. chap. 31. sect. 11. Rex v. Lewis, 6 Carrington and Payne’s Reports, p. 161.

tration of any poison or other destructive thing, or causing it to be taken, is, by a recent act, declared felony.*

In the former edition, when noticing the action of individual poisons, I pursued the arrangement adopted by Foderé and Orfila. This was to consider them under six divisions, viz. *Corrosive, astringent, acrid, narcotic, narcotico-acrid, and septic*. Subsequent examination has convinced me that this is too minute, that it unnecessarily separates some, and that a class is introduced (the septic) which can have no existence. I have therefore readily adopted the division used by Professor Christison, and shall consider poisons under the three grand classes of

IRRITANTS,[†]
NARCOTICS, and
NARCOTICO-ACRIDS.

1. *Signs of poison on the living body.*

A person is supposed to be poisoned, if, being in perfect health, he is attacked, after having taken some food or drink, with violent pain, cramp in the stomach, nausea, vomiting, convulsive action, and a sense of suffocation; or if he be seized, under the same circumstances, with vertigo, giddiness, delirium, or unusual drowsiness.†

All these symptoms may, however, be the effect of sudden illness, and the examiner should therefore recollect whether an epidemic or sporadic disease, resembling that of the patient, does not exist. He should also inquire into his strength, mode of life, and habit of body, and ascertain whether he had previously complained of ill health. The time at which the noxious substance was taken, and the vehicle in which it was given, the taste or odour that was perceived on its administration, and the food or drink that has been lately swallowed, are all subjects that require particular notice.

* 9 George IV. chap. 31, sect. 11. Under this act, Justice Park decided, that putting arsenic into coffee, was administering poison, or causing it to be taken. Rex v. Harley, 4 Carrington and Payne's Reports, p. 369.

† These are the most striking *preliminary* symptoms. Mahon has collected a long list from the older writers, which, however, includes most of the appearances observed during the whole progress of the action of poisons. It is evidently too general to be of much practical value. (See Mahon, vol. 2, p. 263.)

Poisons, also, are generally characterized by the rapidity with which the symptoms follow each other, and by their steady march to a fatal termination. For this, however, as with the early affections, there may be other causes assigned, independent of the action of noxious substances. Nor are these effects invariable, although common. Some of the most fatal, as arsenic, are occasionally accompanied with remissions; others, as nuxvomica and its alkaloid, attack in paroxysms. There is also no doubt, but that, as suggested by Dr. Christison, the occurrence of sleep, immediately after taking some of the irritant poisons, may retard the developement of symptoms.

Having formed an opinion, from a review of the above circumstances, that a poisonous substance has been taken, the next question that arises is, to what class it belongs. Although (as I have already remarked,) the symptoms of poisons are somewhat equivocal and unsettled, yet there are certain leading and characteristic appearances, which, in a majority of cases, serve to distinguish the two great divisions from each other. And these two, are the *irritant* (corrosive or acrid) and the *narcotic*.

“The class of *irritant* poisons comprehend both those which have a purely local, irritating action, and likewise many which also act remotely, but whose most prominent feature of action still is the inflammation they excite wherever they are applied.”*

We may suppose that one of this class is the cause of present disease, if the patient has observed that the food or drink which was its vehicle, had not its ordinary taste—if he has felt a heat, an irritation, or an extraordinary and sudden dryness at the root of the mouth and œsophagus, with a constriction or sense of strangling in those parts—if this be succeeded by an obstinate anxiety to vomit, and sharp pains in the stomach and intestines—if there be great thirst, copious discharges, by vomiting and by stool, accompanied with tenesmus and followed by hiccup, by a sense of constriction across the diaphragm, and a difficulty of breathing—if there be great

* Christison, p. 96.

pain in the region of the kidneys, followed by strangury—if convulsions, cramps of the hands, trembling of the lips, extinction of the voice, repeated faintings, cold sweats, and a small, chorded and irregular pulse be present; and if, in addition to all these, the intellectual faculties remain perfect, until the disease arrives near its fatal termination.*

A narcotic poison, on the other hand, produces the following effects: Stupor, numbness, a great inclination to sleep, coldness, and stiffness of the extremities, a cold sweat of a fœtid or greasy nature, swelling of the neck and face, protrusion of the eye, with a haggard cast of countenance, thickening of the tongue, frequent vertigo, weakened eyesight, or objects presented to it in a fantastic manner, coma, delirium, general debility, palpitation of the heart, the pulse at first full and strong, but afterwards unequal and intermittent, paralysis of the lower extremities, retraction of the lips, general swelling of the body, and dilatation of the veins. At the conclusion of the disease, slight convulsions and pain are sometimes present.†

If we pursue the arrangement proposed above, we shall find that the narcotico-acrid poisons are distinguished by a combination of several of the above symptoms. They are, agitation, pain, acute cries, sometimes stupor and convulsive motions of the muscles of the face, jaws and extremities; vertigo, and occasionally extreme stiffness of the limbs, and contraction of the muscles of the thorax; the eyes red and starting from their sockets, the pupils frequently dilated; insensibility to external impressions; mouth full of foam; tongue and gums livid; nausea, vomiting, frequent stools: often these symptoms attack in paroxysms, and the patient is left comparatively easy for a few moments.‡

It may appear easy, after this enumeration, to distinguish

* Foderé, vol. 4, p. 190. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 15; vol. 2, p. 98, 514. "In general," says the last author, "the patient preserves the use of his intellectual faculties during the first periods, but a short time before death, he falls into a state of great insensibility and immobility, and is agitated by convulsive movements." He also mentions purple spots over the body, and a miliary eruption, as occasional symptoms of this class.

† Foderé, vol. 4, p. 190. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 170, 515.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 367, 516.

the nature of the poison that has been taken, but in ordinary practice it is, notwithstanding, very difficult. There are substances very distinct in their characters which produce similar effects, as for example, cantharides, acrid vegetable substances, and caustic minerals. All these belong to the class of irritants, and generally exhibit similar symptoms. The difficulty is increased, when it is recollected, that ordinary and innoxious substances, so far as concerns their poisonous nature, sometimes cause the most alarming symptoms. Foderé observes, that he has seen a roasted chesnut produce all the symptoms of poison, until a dose of tartar emetic dispelled its influence.*

On the other hand, a variety is frequently observed in the symptoms excited by the same poison, on different individuals. Many causes may conduce to this, such as the mode in which it is exhibited—poison given in the liquid form, is generally more rapid and marked in its effects than when it is exhibited in the solid state; and the substances previously or subsequently taken, may also modify the symptoms. Instances of this variety are to be found in all authors on toxicology. Marc produced salivation in a dog, by giving him a large dose of opium, while sleep, the common consequence, was wanting.† So also Morgagni relates of a female, aged sixty, who had eaten a paste composed of milk and arsenic, which had been prepared for rats. She died in twelve hours after, but without having suffered any severe pains or convulsions. On dissection, however, her stomach was found eroded.‡

I apprehend that the circumstance of the patient's vomiting or not vomiting, has the greatest influence on the course and variety of the symptoms. This is a subject to which I shall have frequent occasion hereafter to refer, but it may be remarked at present, that there are many persons who vomit very readily, whilst in others the act is very difficult, and almost causes convulsions. In the former case, the poison may be rejected before it has time to produce injurious effects,

* I shall notice this point more particularly at the conclusion of the section.

† Foderé, vol. 4, p. 195.

‡ Morgagni, vol. 2, epist. 59, p. 366.

while in the latter, death will be the inevitable consequence. And again, the poison, from the quantity taken, or for some other reason, may itself produce vomiting, and thus prevent the fatal termination. Dr. Petit of Lyons, relates of a person who survived after taking half an ounce of arsenic, and he attributes this to the violent vomiting that ensued. Deschamps gives an account of a female who recovered after taking two drachms of tartar emetic, which was followed by vomiting; whilst another, who by buying small quantities from different apothecaries, had obtained eleven grains of the same salt, died from using it.* It is probable that large doses produce their effects early and violently, and the stomach endeavors to reject them as soon as perceived, while small ones seem to have time to act not only the system generally, but also on the structure of parts.

A minute and accurate notice of symptoms is hence worthy of every attention, but it only forms the commencement of the inquiry in cases of supposed poisoning.

It is the further duty of the physician, to examine every article of a suspicious nature, such as phials, boxes or papers containing powders. These should be carefully put aside without remark. If the patient preserve his senses, we may obtain much necessary information from him, and possibly may also procure the remainder of the drink or substance that he has not completely taken. If this be impracticable, the matter vomited should be preserved, as also the linen or sponges used to collect the fluid which may have been deposited on on the floor of the chamber, and a sufficient quantity should be sealed up, and reserved for the inspection of a competent chemist.

For a proper analysis of the matter vomited—of the matter found in suspected repositories, or the matter found in the stomach or intestines, or both, after death, the following pre-

* A still more striking case was mentioned in a Boston paper of the month of February, 1817. A man named George Beals, aged 21, and residing at Springfield, Mass. with an intent to destroy himself, swallowed at one draught, one ounce and a half of arsenic, immediately after having eaten a hearty supper of beefsteaks. He was seized instantly with a violent vomiting, and was subsequently affected with spasms, but was restored to his usual health in three or four days. In about a month after, he destroyed himself by hanging.

liminary directions require attention. Never make any experiments on the suspected substance, without repeating them on ingredients that are deemed analogous, and in which the quantity of poisonous matter is ascertained. For this purpose, several solutions should be made of substances which it is supposed may probably resemble the poison given, and from the result, a comparison can be instituted. Again, the analysis should never be commenced until the tests are all prepared, and their accuracy determined. The order of proceeding should be previously laid down in the mind of the operator, and when ready, he should perform the experiments at one time. The risk of losing a part of the suspected substance, from employing inconclusive experiments, is thus avoided. Thirdly, if the quantity of matter received be sufficient, it should be divided into small portions, so that the various tests can be applied to each, but if there be only a very small quantity, the symptoms should be carefully considered, together with the indications they present, and an opinion should be formed as to the poison which most probably has caused the present disease. The tests applicable to it, should then be employed. In pursuing this examination, it is of little importance, comparatively speaking, whether a decisive opinion can be formed as to the *quantity* administered: it is sufficient to prove the *nature* and *quality* of the substance.

Chemistry can thus lend its aid in detecting mineral substances; but it often fails in ascertaining the nature of a vegetable poison. Of late years, however, great advances have been made even in this department, as will be seen more particularly when noticing opium, hydrocyanic acid, &c. But even in cases where the powers of analysis are at fault, some approach to the actual truth may be made by a careful examination of the contents of the elementary canal. Grains or berries, or the ligneous parts of plants have thus been detected.

The kitchen utensils should always be noticed, since it may happen that a copper vessel badly tinned is the sole cause of these violent effects; and we should also remember, that the green colour which is frequently observed in the matter vo-

mitted, may be owing to vitiated bile, as well as to a mineral or vegetable poison.

It is an ancient direction, that part of the suspected substance should be given to some animal, in order to test its injurious nature. But the uncertainty of this proof has been shown in a former page, where it was mentioned, that some articles poisonous to man, are innoxious to animals; and it is therefore a point of considerable interest to ascertain on which of them it is most likely to produce similar effects. Physiologists generally recommend a dog as the subject, and Orfila says it should be a small, robust one, that is fasting. The suspected substance should not be put into his food, as is the ordinary practice, nor indeed should he be allowed to swallow it. This would produce the hazard of losing the whole by vomiting; and he hence advises that the œsophagus should be detached, and perforated with a small hole; into this a glass funnel is to be introduced, and the liquid poured through it into the stomach; the œsophagus is then tied below the opening. If the substance be solid, it should be put into a small paper cone, in order that it may be pushed down into the stomach through the opening. This, he adds, is the only method by which vomiting can be prevented, and the suspected substance exhibit its true character.* The testimony to be derived from this proof of poisoning, is, however, barely *presumptive*. The poisonous substance may be decomposed in the stomach of the patient by food or antidotes; it may have been rejected by vomiting, or it may have been absorbed, so as to leave only a minute quantity in the intestinal canal; and in all these cases, the animal will probably escape uninjured. “Experiments of this kind, separately considered, possess no value, only as they present a positive result—that is to say, death; but we repeat again, they ought not to be regarded, even when well made, except as a secondary means, proper for corroborating the

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 532. It has been objected to this mode of experimenting, that the operation on the œsophagus will destroy life, or produce alterations of texture; but our author shows by numerous examples, that the ligature on this part in dogs, constantly produces, during the two first days, nothing more than a slight fever, and a little dejection, which is incapable of destroying them in so short a time; and also, that if animals be killed when in this state, no lesions will be discovered on dissection. If poisons, on the contrary, be introduced through the opening, their effects will be early manifested. (Vol. 2, p. 482.)

conclusions drawn from chemical analysis, symptoms, and lesions of texture.”* .

While, therefore, such investigations are not to be totally discouraged, it is proper to suggest that in many, indeed in most instances, the suspected matter found is not sufficient to warrant the medical examiner in employing it for this purpose. He will generally have the alternative presented, of omitting all other experiments if he makes these. Besides, as has been conclusively remarked by Professor Christison, “if the quantity of poison in the suspected substance is great enough to affect one of the perfect animals, it may be recognized to a certainty by its physical or chemical properties.”†

It must also be recollected, in connexion with the circumstance under notice, that the human fluids, and particularly the *bile*, may, from disease, acquire such an acrimony as to be fatal to animals. Morgagni relates a remarkable instance of this kind. A child died of tertian fever, after having suffered violent convulsions. On dissection, the stomach was found to contain green bile, which tinged the scalpel of a violet colour. Having dipped the point of his instrument in the bile, he wounded two pigeons, who expired almost instantly in violent convulsions; and some of it, mixed with bread, was given to a cock, who also expired in a short time.‡

Until now, I have considered the subject of poisoning persons in a state of health. I may add, that this is often attempted on individuals who are ill, and the difficulty of distinguishing the symptoms of disease from those of poison is proportionably increased. It may be said, that the disease has taken a sudden turn—that the medicines used have been prejudicial, and that present appearances are a convulsive or final effort of the system. In such cases, attention to the following circumstances is required:

1. The sudden occurrence of symptoms which do not usually accompany the disease under which the patient labours. Thus, we should feel suspicious, if, in an ordinary case, nausea, vomiting, hiccup, fainting, cold sweats, with bloody stools,

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 535.

† Morgagni, vol. 2, epist. 59, p. 396.

‡ Christison, p. 62.

should suddenly and rapidly follow each other; or again, if stertor, delirium, or insanity should supervene on a case of common disease.

2. Moral evidence. This is to be attended to in all cases, but more particularly under the circumstances now indicated. The physician should never allow these to prejudice his mind, but he should never neglect noticing them; and I take this early occasion to say, that the physician is, of all persons, the best judge concerning them. Let him ascertain whether an enmity does not exist between the sick person and some one who attends or visits him: If so, inquire whether any poisonous substances have lately been purchased; whether these are still in the house; whether the alarming symptoms came on immediately after taking a drink, or any other substance of an innocent nature; and particularly, ascertain whether any thing has been given without the orders of the physician, or by a person ignorant of medicaments.

Inquire also, as to any suspicious conduct after the patient's death; such as hastening the funeral; preventing the inspection of the body, and giving a false account of the previous illness. In many cases, unfortunately, the crime of seduction is followed by attempts to destroy life; and hence, if a female has been poisoned, the investigation should extend to the decision of that fact.*

In illustration of these remarks, I will only quote, at present, two cases; one comparatively ancient, and the other of late occurrence. When noticing individual poisons, numerous others must necessarily be mentioned, in which the moral evidence has thrown great light on their respective intricacies.

An individual aged fifty-six years, and subject to flatulence, took a bowl of chocolate and milk previous to starting on a journey. It was prepared by his daughter. He had advanced a very short distance, when he was seized with nausea, vomiting, and other severe symptoms, which obliged him to return home, and his death followed in nine hours after taking the chocolate. His body was not inflated; his visage was natural, but the nails were blue; and on his shoulders and

* Christison, p. 71.

breast were spots of the same colour. This disease was considered cholera morbus; but Hoffman, from whom the narrative is taken, believed it to be the effect of arsenic rather than cholera, and for the following reasons: the symptoms which followed the use of the drink, such as copious vomiting, accompanied with a cadaverous paleness of the face, coldness of the extremities, great prostration of strength, poignant lancinating pain in the intestines, and the cessation of arterial action, and convulsions, all succeeded each other with greater rapidity than is observed in ordinary cholera morbus. Again, the daughter was at enmity with the father, who had punished her for living with her valet; and it was also known that she had previously purchased arsenic.*

“William Muir, was tried and condemned at Glasgow, in 1812, for poisoning his wife. In the course of the day on which she was taken ill, she was visited by a farmer of the neighbourhood, who had studied physic a little in his youth. He learned from her that she had breakfasted on porridge a short time before she felt herself ill, and that she suspected the porridge to have been poisoned. He immediately procured the wooden bowl in which the cottagers of Scotland keep the portion of meal used each time for making the porridge, and finding in it some meal, with shining particles interspersed, he wrapped a sample in paper, and took the proper measures for preserving its identity. He then secured also a sample from the family store in a barrel. The two parcels were produced by him on the trial, and from experiments made in court, the late Dr. Cleghorn was enabled to declare that the meal from the bowl contained arsenic, and that the meal from the barrel did not. These facts, besides proving that the woman had next to a certainty taken arsenic in the porridge, likewise in conjunction with other slight moral circumstances, established that the poison had been mixed with the meal in the house, and on the morning when the deceased took ill, before any stranger entered the house.”†

The subject of what have been called slow poisons, de-

* F. Hoffman's *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, sect. 2, chap. 8, p. 170.

† Christison, p. 72. The case was communicated by Professor Alison.

serves a passing notice, although it must be confessed that the this is so closely connected with popular superstition, that it is almost impossible to separate truth from falsehood. In Italy, for example, it was formerly said, that poisons were invented to destroy life at any stated period, from a few hours to a year.* This, however, is a mere fiction, and it is now

* We are indebted to Professor Beckmann for a very elaborate article on this subject, in which he has concentrated nearly all that is known concerning *secret poisoning*. Of this, I shall present an abstract, aided with some facts from other sources. He considers it unquestionable, that the ancients were acquainted with such a kind of poison, and thinks it may be proved from the testimony of Plutarch, Quintillian, and other respectable authors. The former states that a slow poison, which occasioned heat, a cough, spitting of blood, a consumption, and a weakness of intellect, was administered to Aratus of Sicyon. Theophrastus speaks of a poison prepared from aconite, which could be moderated in such a manner as to have effect in two or three months, or at the end of a year, or two years; and he also relates, that Thrasyas had discovered a method of preparing from other plants a poison, which, given in small doses, occasioned an easy but certain death, without any pain, and which could be kept back for a long time without causing weakness or corruption. This last poison was much used at Rome, about two hundred years before the Christian era. At a later period, a female named Locusta, was the agent in preparing these poisons, and she destroyed in this way, at the instigation of Nero, Britannicus, the son of Agrippina.

The Carthaginians seem also to have been acquainted with the art of poisoning; and they are said, on the authority of Aulus Gellius, to have administered some to Regulus, the Roman general. Cotemporary writers, however, it must be added, do not mention this.

The principal poisons known to the ancients, were prepared from plants, and particularly aconite, hemlock and poppy, or from animal substances, and among the latter, none is more remarkable than that obtained from the sea-hare (*Lepus marinus*, or *Aplysia depilans* of the *Systema Naturæ*.) With this, Titus is said to have been despatched by Domitian. They do not seem to have been acquainted with the common mineral poisons.

In the year 1659, during the pontificate of Alexander VII., it was observed at Rome, that many young married women became widows, and that many husbands died when they became disagreeable to their wives. The government used great vigilance to detect the poisoners, and suspicion at length fell upon a society of young wives, whose president appeared to be an old woman, who pretended to foretell future events, and who had often predicted very exactly the death of many persons. By means of a crafty female, their practices were detected, the whole society were arrested and put to the torture, and the old woman, whose name was Spara, and four others, were publicly hanged. This Spara was a Sicilian, and is said to have acquired her knowledge from Tofania at Palermo.

Tophania, or Tofania, was an infamous woman, who resided first at Palermo, and afterwards at Naples. She sold the poison, which from her acquired the name of *Aqua della Toffana*, (it was also called *Acquetta di Napoli*, or *Acquetta* alone,) but she distributed her preparations by way of charity to such wives as wished to have other husbands. From four to six drops were sufficient to destroy a man, and it was asserted, that the dose could be so proportioned as to operate in a certain time. Labat says, that Tofania distributed her poison in small glass phials, with this inscription, *Manna of St. Nicholas of Bari*, and ornamented with the image of the saint. She lived to a great age, but was at last dragged from a monastery, in which she had taken refuge, and put to the torture, when she confessed her crimes, and was strangled.

In no country, however, has the art of poisoning excited more attention than it

well understood, that we know of no substances which will produce death at a determinate epoch. But I shall have oc-

did in France, about the year 1670. Margaret d'Aubray, wife of the Marquis De Brinvillier, was the principal agent in this horrible business. A needy adventurer, named Godin De Sainte Croix, had formed an acquaintance with the Marquis during their campaigns in the Netherlands, and became at Paris a constant visitor at his house, where in a short time he found means to insinuate himself into the good graces of the Marchioness. It was not long before the Marquis died, not, however, until their joint fortune was nearly dissipated. Her conduct, in openly carrying on this amour, induced her father to have Sainte Croix arrested and sent to the Bastile. Here he got acquainted with an Italian, of the name of Exili, from whom he learnt the art of preparing poisons. After a year's imprisonment, Sainte Croix was released, when he flew to the Marchioness, and instructed her in the art, in order that she might employ it in bettering the circumstances of both. She assumed the appearance of a nun, distributed food to the poor, nursed the sick in the Hotel Dieu, and tried the strength of her poisons undetected on these hapless wretches. She bribed one Chaussée, Sainte Croix's servant, to poison her own father, after introducing him into his service, and also her brother, and endeavoured to poison her sister. A suspicion arose that they had been poisoned, and the bodies were opened, but no detection followed at this time. Their villainous practices were brought to light in the following manner: Sainte Croix, when preparing poison, was accustomed to wear a glass mask; but as this happened once to drop off by accident, he was suffocated, and found dead in his laboratory. Government caused the effects of this man, who had no family, to be examined, and a list of them to be made out. On searching them, there was found a small box, to which Sainte Croix had affixed a written request, that after his death it might be delivered to the Marchioness De Brinvillier, or in case she should not be living, that it might be burnt. It was found to contain a great abundance of poisons of every kind, with labels, on which their effects, proved by experiment on animals, were marked. The principal poison, however, was corrosive sublimate. When the Marchioness heard of the death of her lover and instructor, she was desirous to have the casket, and endeavored to get possession of it by bribing the officers of justice, but as she failed in this, she quitted the kingdom. La Chaussée, however, continued at Paris, laid claim to the property of Sainte Croix, was seized and imprisoned, confessed more acts of villainy than was suspected, and was, in consequence, broken alive on the wheel, in 1673.

The Marchioness fled to England, and from thence to Leige, where she took refuge in a convent. Desgrais, an officer of justice, was despatched in pursuit of her, and having assumed the dress of an abbe, contrived to entice her from this privileged place. Among her effects at the convent, there was found a confession, and a complete catalogue of all her crimes, in her own hand-writing. She was taken to Paris, convicted, and on the 16th of July, 1676, publicly beheaded, and afterwards burnt.

The practice of poisoning was not, however, suppressed by this execution, and it was asserted, that confessions of a suspicious nature, were constantly made to the priests. A court for watching, searching after, and punishing prisoners, was at length established in 1679, under the title of *Chambre de poison*, or *Chambre ardente*. This was shortly used as a state engine against those who were obnoxious to the court, and the names of individuals of the first rank, both male and female, were prejudiced. Two females, La Vigoreux and La Voisin, were burnt alive by order of this court, in Feb. 1680. But it was abolished in the same year.

Professor Beckmann relates the following, as communicated to him by Linnæus: "Charles the XI. king of Sweden, having ruined several noble families by seizing on their property, and having after that, made a journey to Torneo, he fell into a consumptive disorder, which no medicine could cure. One day he asked his physician in a very earnest manner, what was the cause of his illness. The physician replied, 'your majesty has been loaded with too many maledictions.' 'Yes,' returned the king, 'I wish to God that the reduction of the nobility's estates had not taken place,

casion in the next section, when stating the case of the late Prince Charles, of Augustenberg, to show that the idea of

and that I had never undertaken a journey to 'Torneo.' After his death, his intestines were found to be full of small ulcers."

There has been great diversity of opinion as to the nature of these poisons. That prepared by Tofania, appears to have been a clear insipid water, and the sale of aquafortis was for a long time forbidden in Rome, because it was considered the principal ingredient. This, however, is not probable. In Paris, the famous *poudre de succession*, (also a secret poison,) was at one time supposed to consist of diamond dust, pounded exceedingly fine; and at another, to contain sugar of lead, as the chief ingredient. Haller was of this last opinion. In the casket of Sainte Croix, were found sublimate, opium, regulus of antimony, vitriol, and a large quantity of poison ready prepared, the principal ingredients of which, the physicians were not able to distinguish. [Garelli, physician to Charles VI. king of the two Sicilies, at the time when Tofania was arrested, wrote to the celebrated Hoffman, that the *Aqua Tofania* was nothing else than crystallized arsenic, dissolved in a large quantity of water by decoction, with the addition (but for what purpose, he knew not,) of the herb *cymbalaria*, (probably the *Antirrhinum cymbalaria*.) And this information, he observes, was communicated to him by his imperial majesty himself, to whom the judicial procedure, confirmed by the confession of the criminal, was transmitted. But it was objected to this opinion, that it differed from the ordinary effects of arsenic, in never betraying itself by any particular action on the human body.

The Abbe Gagliani, on the other hand, asserts that it was a mixture of opium and cantharides, and that the liquor obtained from its composition, was as limpid as rock water, and without taste. Its effects are slow, and almost imperceptible. Beckmann appears to favour this idea, and suggests that a similar poison is used in the east under the name of *powst*, being water which had stood a night over the juice of poppies. It is given to princes whom it is wished to despatch privately, and produces loss of strength and understanding, so that they die in the end, torpid and insensible.

Dr. Duncan, jun. however, objects to the opinion of Gagliani, as perfectly inconsistent with the appearance and effects of the poison. The prevailing idea is that of Garelli.

Cellini, who lived during the 16th century, tells us in his Autobiography, that poisoning was attempted on him with the diamond, (not because they deemed it noxious, but from the particles irritating the stomach,) and with corrosive sublimate. (Beckmann, vol. 1, p. 54. Smith, p. 195. London Monthly Magazine, vol. 14, p. 515. Metzger, p. 336, 402. Supplement to Encyclopedia Britannica, Art. Aqua Tofania, by Dr. Duncan, jun.)

"It is not because we know less," says Dr. Duncan, "but because we know a great deal more than our forefathers; that the art of secret poisoning seems to be lost." In Turkey, it would appear from Dr. Oppenheim's narrative, that corrosive sublimate is often employed. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 23, p. 438.) Mr. Madden, (Travels, American Edition, vol. 1, p. 33, 32,) however, says, that the poison used is tasteless, and on that account imagines it to be arsenic. He saw eight cases, while residing in Turkey, and in most of them, death ensued within twelve, and in all, within 48 hours. "The terrible science of poisons, (says Sismondi,) is the first branch of chemistry which is successfully cultivated by barbarous nations." (Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 1, p. 256.)

Secret poisoning has even penetrated into the forests of our own country. "The celebrated chief, *Black Bird*, of the Omawhaws, gained great reputation as a medicine man; his adversaries fell rapidly before his potent spells. His medicine was arsenic, furnished him for this purpose by the villany of the traders." (Dr. James' account of Major Long's Expedition, vol. 1, p. 226.)

Those who are curious on the poisons of the ancients, I will refer to Adams on the ancient principles of Toxicology, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 315, and Sir Henry Hallford's Essay on the deaths of some illustrious persons of Antiquity.

slow poison is still prevalent, even among the physicians of continental Europe.

The only case in which we can admit the action of poisons as in any manner approaching that ascribed to the deleterious agents used in former times, is when minute portions of the irritant poisons have been administered from time to time; or when individuals, through their occupations and employments, are daily exposed to an atmosphere containing small quantities of them. In this way the effects of disease may be mistaken for poisoning, and vice versa. Their course often is, gradually to cause irreparable injury to the digestive and lymphatic systems, and finally to destroy life. In such instances, great caution in the examination of symptoms is necessary, and an extended inquiry should be made as to the agents that possibly may induce them.

Poisons may also be administered to several persons at once, as at an entertainment, and the symptoms that follow be so various as to render the cause doubtful, were it not understood that such consequences are of frequent occurrence. I shall endeavour to illustrate this point by some cases.

In the month of May, 1711, four individuals, viz. a priest, two females (one of whom was his sister-in-law,) and another person, all in good health and on a journey, stopped at an inn to dine. They proceeded on their journey after taking this meal; but in a short time the priest was seized with such violent pain, as to oblige him to dismount from his horse. Copious evacuations by vomiting and stool succeeded, and his illness increased so rapidly that it was found necessary to take him back to Cesenne, the place where they had dined. A physician was called in, who, conceiving the complaint to be only an ordinary colic, treated it with fomentations, glysters, purgatives and anodynes. During this time, one of the females was seized with severe pain and weakness, accompanied with copious evacuations. The fourth person of the party also complained of pain and weight at the stomach; but notwithstanding this, the physician had no suspicion of poison, since the other female was in perfect health, and the landlord protested that there could have been nothing noxious in his dishes. On the next day they were all somewhat better, and were

enabled to arrive at a place near where Morgagni resided, for whom they immediately sent. This great physician, having learnt the circumstances, immediately inquired whether there was not some dish on the table, of which the female in good health had not eaten. He was answered in the affirmative, and it was ascertained to have been a large dish of rice, served up at first. He settled in his own mind, that there were poisonous materials in this dish; but the difficulty was, why the priest, who had eaten the least, should have suffered the most, while the female who had eaten a larger quantity was not so ill; and finally, that the fourth person, who had eaten more than all the rest, had only some pain in his stomach. Was there not, said Morgagni, some cheese grated over this rice? They answered in the affirmative, and the priest, who had little or no appetite, ate scarcely any thing but the cheese; the female ate both cheese and rice, while the other person ate the rice with scarcely any cheese. Then, said Morgagni, the state of the case is, that the cheese was prepared with arsenic to kill rats, and not having been laid away with sufficient care, it was served up for your rice, while you were hurrying the landlord for your dinner. This opinion was verified by the confession of the landlord himself, who, learning that the patients were out of danger, avowed that such was the cause of the accident.

At a banquet, numerously attended, a dish was brought in during the dessert, in which arsenic had been used instead of meal. Those of the guests who had eaten or drank but little, died in a few hours; whilst those who had eaten considerably, were saved by copious vomiting. Some lived for several years, and when examined after death, *the cicatrices of large ulcers were found in their stomachs.*

In another instance, a boy two years old, and two adult females, partook of some soup in which arsenic was mixed. The boy took only two spoonfuls, but it was on an empty stomach; whilst the females, who had already eaten, took the remainder of it. They vomited copiously, and survived; whilst the other did not vomit, and died, and on dissection, his stomach was found ulcerated.*

* Foderé, vol. 4, p. 242, 244. These cases are quoted from Morgagni—*de Causis et Sedibus Morborum*, epist. 59.

From these, and several other cases related by Morgagni and Hoffman, Foderé draws the following conclusions. 1. In such instances, the physician should enter into the most minute details concerning every thing that has passed at the meal. Inquire whether every one ate from all the dishes, and in what quantity; what kind of meats were set down, and what wines drunk. 2. That very different effects ensue from taking poison on an empty or on a full stomach; and hence Baccius, he says, recommends to those *who fear being poisoned at a banquet, first to eat and drink a considerable quantity*. This precaution was doubtless not an idle one in some of the capital cities of continental Europe, and one effect of it certainly is, that it protects the stomach to a certain degree from the activity of the poison, and also facilitates vomiting. The practice of mountebanks, who pretend to sell antidotes to arsenic, is said to be in conformity with this direction. They first fill the stomach with milk or oily fluids, and then swallow the arsenic in public. In secret, however, they shortly throw it up again, and sometimes it proves fatal when retained too long. 3. It may sometimes be necessary to inquire of what kind of dainties the poisoned persons were most fond, since murderers have sometimes taken advantage of a known partiality. 4. It is evidently no reason that a certain article of food or drink is not poisonous, because some individuals have taken it without inconvenience. We have already seen the difference between vomiting and not vomiting. The greater the quantity of poison taken, the more is there a hope of escaping; whilst those who feel no immediate ill effects, are often the earliest victims. Both descriptions of persons should be examined, and the matter vomited should be analyzed, in order to detect the nature of the poison.*

It is a very difficult question to determine whether poisoning is the result of suicide or homicide. We can only form an opinion from moral considerations, and a notice of the following is recommended by Foderé. The previous state of mind of the deceased—whether he has been subject to delirium; also if he has not met with losses—has been disappoint-

* Foderé, vol. 4, p. 240 to 248. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 548.

ed in his hopes, or is suffering under disgrace. Also, whether any of the persons with whom he lived or associated, had any interest in his death. The season of the year also deserves consideration. He observes, that suicides are most frequent during the period of the solstices and the equinoxes. We should also ascertain whether the patient, instead of complaining, remains quiet, seeks solitude, and refuses the aid of medical men and of medicines. Any kind of writing left by the individual, to express his last wishes, as it is the most common, so it is also the most certain, proof of self-destruction. But finding a part of the poison in the room or in his pockets, is evidently a very equivocal proof, since it may quite as easily be put there by others as by himself.*

It may sometimes happen that a false accusation of poisoning is brought, and that great illness is pretended. In such instances, the complainer should be tested by the rules already laid down, and a long examination will scarcely ever be necessary in order to develop the deceit. I will state a single case in elucidation.

"Samuel Whalley was indicted at the York Spring Assizes (England,) in 1821, for maliciously administering arsenic to Martha King, who was pregnant by him. The female swore that the prisoner, after twice trying, but in vain, to prevail on her to take drugs for the purpose of procuring abortion, sent her a present of tarts, of which she ate one and a half; that in half an hour she was seized with symptoms of poisoning from some irritant poison, and that she continued ill for some time after. Mr. Thackrah, of Leeds, found arsenic in the tarts that remained untouched, and likewise in some matter that was vomited in his presence, after the administration of an emetic, as well as in other vomited matters which were preserved for him between his first and second visits. Her appearance, however, did not correspond with the complaint

* Foderé, vol. 4. p. 248. Smith, p. 274. Metzger observes, "La seule présomption physique, (of suicide,) est la quantité considérable du poison englouti, dont le goût nauséabond eût certainement excité le vomissement, s'il eût été administré par une main étrangère. Les poisons végétaux entraînent presque toujours l'idée d'imprudence, et excluent conséquemment, dans le plus grand nombre des cas, celle de suicide; l'opium seul est communément mis avec connoissance de cause en usage." (p. 148.)

that she made of her sufferings; her pulse and tongue were natural, and on careful investigation, the following inconsistencies were detected. 1. She said she felt a coppery taste in the act of eating the tarts; a taste which arsenic certainly does not possess. 2. From the quantity of arsenic in the tarts which remained, she could not have taken above ten grains; while even after repeated attacks of vomiting, the alleged matter subsequently preserved contained nearly fifteen grains. 3. The matter first vomited, contained only one grain, while the matter alleged to have been vomited subsequently, contained fifteen grains. 4. The time at which these fifteen grains were alleged to have been vomited, was not until between two or three hours after the symptoms began, in which case the symptoms would before that time have been in all probability violent. The prisoner was acquitted, and the prosecutor and another woman who corroborated her deposition, afterwards admitted that they had entered into a conspiracy to impute the crime to him, because he had deserted her, on finding that she was too intimate with other persons.”*

I will conclude this section with a brief notice of such diseases and their symptoms, as are most apt to be mistaken for the effects of poison. And first, of those that resemble the consequences of *irritant poisons*. Among them Dr. Christison enumerates the following: Distension and rupture of the stomach; rupture of the duodenum, biliary ducts, uterus or other organs in the abdomen; the effects of drinking cold water; bilious vomiting and cholera; inflammation of the stomach; inflammation of the intestines; inflammation of the peritoneum, spontaneous perforation of the stomach; melæna and hæmatemesis; colic, iliac passion and obstructed intestines.

Independent of all these, idiosyncrasy alone will produce alarming effects, which may be mistaken for the consequences of deleterious agents. Some individuals have an antipathy to a particular article of diet, and in some instances the bare seeing of it, and in others the eating of it, produces the

* Christison, p. 92. Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 29, p. 19. The credit of detecting the conspiracy in this case, is due to Mr. Thackrah and Mr. Walker.

most alarming consequences. Cheese, and various other articles have produced such effects. But the most striking cases of resemblance to the effects of poison, probably occur in those who, after being long accustomed to a particular species of food, for the first time use another kind. The town of Martigues in France, is almost altogether inhabited by fishermen, who have lived on fish since their infancy. Foderé, during the first year of his residence there, often prescribed meat soups to his sick, but in every instance their administration was followed by violent nausea and vomiting. They confessed that it was the first time they had used any aliment prepared from meat.

Distension of the stomach from excessive gluttony may cause sudden death; and although it is immediately owing in many instances to congestive apoplexy, without any rupture of vessels, yet in some it would appear to be altogether independent of this. Thus Wildberg mentions of a corpulent gentleman who died suddenly fifteen minutes after dinner, and as he lived on bad terms with his wife, a suspicion arose that he had been poisoned. He fell asleep immediately after dinner, but in a few seconds awoke in great anguish, declared he was dying, and actually expired before the physician arrived. The stomach on dissection, was found enormously distended with various articles of food, while the diaphragm was pushed high into the chest, from the great accumulation of contents. There was no particular congestion of the brain.* In these instances, as in many of the succeeding, though the symptoms be suspicious, the appearances on dissection will distinguish the cause.

Rupture of the stomach generally arises from over distension with efforts to vomit; or there may be some chronic disease which, when a particular exciting cause operates, induces this dreadful termination. In a case at Paris related by Lallemand, the coats of the body of the stomach were healthy, but the pylorus was indurated. *Rupture of the duodenum* is referred to at page 42 of this volume. Death followed in a few hours after violent pain, vomiting, cold extre-

* Christison, p. 100.

mities and failing pulse. On dissection, the mucous coat of the duodenum was found much inflamed, and four inches and a half from the pylorus was a lacerated hole. *Rupture of the biliary ducts, uterus, &c.* from the violence and rapidity of their effects, may equally imitate the results of irritant poisons. A female in Scotland was supposed to be poisoned, in consequence of being suddenly seized at 2 P. M. with pain in the abdomen, vomiting and purging and general sinking, and dying at 10. On inquiry, however, it was proved that she had taken nothing since breakfast, at 8 A. M.; and also, that the pain commenced at the lower part of the abdomen. A fallopian conception was seen on examination, and from the rupture of this, death was produced. Sudden death from *drinking cold water* has been already noticed in a previous part of this volume. It is highly probable, that in some cases where life is prolonged, acute gastritis occur, and accordingly after death, marks of inflammation will be discovered, but the appearances on dissection, as well as the phenomena in the more common instances, are sufficient to set us right as to the cause.

Of bilious vomiting and cholera, it must be allowed that many of the symptoms are identical with those of irritant poisons—such as the burning pain in the stomach and bowels, incessant vomiting and purging, and the irritation about the throat and rectum, cramps, extinction of the voice, smallness of the pulse, coldness of the extremities, &c. It is natural that this should be so, since the disease is mainly the same in both instances. Yet there are some circumstances which may aid in discriminating. In cholera, the sense of acidity in the throat and œsophagus does not precede the vomiting; in poisoning, it frequently does. The patient, also, in the latter case, often dwells on it, as the chief source of his sufferings, while this is seldom witnessed in cases of cholera. In cholera, the vomiting is never bloody, according to Christison; at least it is rare; while in poisoning, from several of the active and more common agents, it is not unfrequent.* As to the

* *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, vol. 1. p. 381. Art. *Cholera*, by Dr. Brown. See also a case of epidemic cholera mistaken for poisoning, but in which the analysis by Orfila was decisive, in showing the absence of any poisonous substance. (*Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 9, p. 405.)

rapidity of the effects of each, though generally speaking, the common cholera morbus is far from being as soon fatal as poisons, yet there have been cases in this country where death has succeeded in a few hours. The malignant cholera often exceeds irritant agents in the celerity of its fatal results, but I submit, whether its characters are not sufficiently marked to distinguish it from a case of poisoning.

The season of the year, and the prevailing epidemics, are also worthy of consideration. In some cases of poisoning, where the symptoms greatly resembled cholera, and where this was urged in explanation, it appeared that death had happened during mid-winter,—a season when, at least with us, common cholera is unknown.

Acute inflammation of the stomach is comparatively a very rare disease, and although *inflammations of the intestines and of the peritoneum* are more common, yet their course is usually more protracted, and their discriminating symptoms equally marked with those for which they might be mistaken. So also with other affections of the bowels that I have mentioned. *Melæna* and *hæmatemesis* are characterised by the purging and vomiting of pure or altered blood, but beyond this, they have hardly a symptom in common with irritant poisoning.*

Spontaneous perforation of the stomach I shall consider in the next section. The obscurity of its symptoms, and the consequent necessity of establishing the nature of the case by dissection, will authorize a notice of it in that place.

On a review of the above diseases, it will be seen that although some of the leading symptoms in most are similar to those produced by poisoning, yet a careful observer may in a short time discover some points of difference. The accumulation of these constitutes the history of the particular disease, and it is evidently incomplete, without a proper examination after death.

The principal disease, whose symptoms may be confounded

* In the above remarks on diseases, I have followed Christison, p. 100 to 116. For a case of peritonitis resembling poisoning, see *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 4, p. 970. Cholera-morbus from the too free use of ices. Several cases of this occurred in 1826, in Paris, Lyons and Rouen, and poisoning was suspected. (*Bulletin Des Sciences Médicales*, vol. 9, p. 250.)

with those of *narcotic poisoning*, is apoplexy. Among such as are common to each, are the more or less complete abolition of sense and motion, and the supervention of convulsions. Apoplexy has, however, some distinctive characters, which are thus enumerated by Dr. Christison. It usually has several premonitory symptoms; it attacks the old principally, although not exclusively; its subjects are generally corpulent and of full habit; it attacks very soon after a meal, and its symptoms begin abruptly. I need hardly say how inapplicable several of these distinctions are in cases of poisoning. Patients, also, cannot be roused from the profound sleep of apoplexy; they may, however, when shaken or loudly called, in instances of narcotism from opium, the most common of these poisons, until towards the fatal termination.*

Epilepsy has also some characters in common with the effects of narcotics, but the history of the case, its chronic nature, the peculiarity of its paroxysms, and their length, all serve to distinguish it.*

2. *Signs of poison on the dead body.*

In many instances, the medical examiner is not called until the stage now about to be considered. The illness may have been sudden and rapid; it may have been difficult to procure medical aid, and thus the opportunity has been lost of comparing the symptoms with the appearances found on dissection. If such be the case, he should be guided solely by the phenomena that present themselves during the inspection.

I cannot better introduce my remarks on this branch of the subject, than by quoting two cases from Dr. Christison's *Treatise on Toxicology*. None better illustrate the necessity of medico-legal examination, in its most extended sense. The first is one that recently occurred to Dr. Wildberg, of Rostock. He was desired to examine the body of a girl who died while her father was in the act of chastising her for stealing, and who was believed by all the by-standers, and by the father himself, to have died of the beating. Accordingly he found the marks of many stripes on the arms, shoulders and

* Christison, p. 578 to 589.

back; and under some of the marks, blood was extravasated in considerable quantity. But these injuries, though severe, did not appear to him adequate to account for death. He therefore proceeded to examine the cavities; and on opening the stomach, he found it very much inflamed, and lined with a white powder, which proved on analysis to be arsenic. It turned out, that on the theft being detected, the girl had taken arsenic for fear of her father's anger: that she vomited during the flogging, and died in slight convulsions.

Pyl is the reporter of the second case. A woman was found with a wound in the left side of the breast, but the hæmorrhage, which never had been great, was soon suppressed. Notwithstanding, she died in a few hours. On dissection, it was found that the wound had penetrated the pericardium, but did not reach the heart; and although the fifth intercostal artery had been divided, hardly any blood was effused into the cavity of the chest. Coupling this fact with the trifling hæmorrhage during life, and the presence of vomiting and convulsions immediately before death, Pyl became satisfied that she had not died of the wound; and accordingly, the marks of corrosion in the mouth and throat, and of irritation in the stomach, with the subsequent discovery of the remains of some nitric acid in a glass in her room, proved that she had died of poison.*

In addition to the rules already laid down in a previous chapter, it is proper to observe, that the whole of the alimentary canal, from the mouth downward, must be particularly examined, and after opening the abdomen, the liver should be raised, so as to view its concave surface, the gall bladder, and a portion of the stomach. The spleen, pancreas, and mesentery, should also be noticed. Ligatures are then to be applied to the different portions of the alimentary tube, in the manner directed at page 11, of this volume, and the parts included within them removed from the body. This precaution is absolutely necessary to prevent the loss of any fluids contained in the alimentary canal.

After being thus removed, it should be opened throughout

* Christison, p. 53, 54.

its whole extent, and the fluids and solids contained in it should be collected in proper vessels. The whole internal surface must then be washed with distilled water, which must likewise be preserved. The lesions observed should be noted, and all the inflamed or gangrenous portions detached with a scalpel. If there be any perforations, the parts round the holes should be taken out and the solid portions preserved in alcohol. And it is highly important, in this case, previously to absorb with a sponge all the fluid contained in the abdomen, and afterwards to deposite it in proper receptacles for future analysis.*

This examination should be made in the presence of a magistrate, and every fact should be recorded by a secretary in the order of its notice.

The next subject of inquiry is, the class of poisons which the appearances on dissection seem to indicate. The irritant poisons generally produce inflammation of the first passages, and occasionally constrictions of the intestinal canal, perforations or preternatural softness of the interior coats. Gangrene and sphacelus are also enumerated as consequences, but they are certainly rare.

The inflammation varies as to extent and intensity. Sometimes it affects the mouth, œsophagus, and more particularly the stomach, and extends to the duodenum, while in others it reaches through the whole space of the digestive tube. Again, the membranes are sometimes of a clear red colour, without any trace of ulceration, sometimes of a cherry red, with longitudinal or transverse patches of a blackish colour, formed by extravasated blood between the coats. Ulcerations are observed in various parts, but particularly near the pylorus.

The effects of narcotic poisons are far from being marked or even peculiar. It is a common, but mistaken, idea, that they induce a rapid tendency to putrefaction, that the countenance is red, swollen or livid, that the extremities are flexible, that the blood is in a fluid state, and effused in various parts, and that the stomach and intestines are touched with sphacelus, without any inflammation. Some of these may, and do,

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 72, vol. 2, p. 519.

occasionally occur, but they are far from being invariable in their appearance. Orfila denies the correctness of several from his own experiments. He has frequently observed, that putrefaction was not advanced more than usual at twenty-four, or even thirty-six hours after death; that the limbs were as stiff as in those who had been poisoned by substances of another class, and that the blood was coagulated a short time after death. On dissection, no traces of inflammation were found by him in the digestive canal of animals killed by narcotics, and he attributes such appearances to the subsequent administration of substances capable of producing inflammation. The lungs, however, present almost constantly livid and even black spots, and their texture is more dense and less crepitating. The brain also often exhibits distention of its veins.*

Dr. Christison observes, that the morbid appearances left by them on the dead body, are commonly insignificant. "Sometimes, however, the veins of the brain are much gorged with blood, and the ventricles and membranes contain serosity. The blood appears to be sometimes altered in its nature, but these changes are by no means invariable, and are sometimes not remarked at all."†

As to the narcotico-acrid, it may be remarked, that there are some which are capable of exciting severe inflammation, accompanied occasionally with ulceration, while others do not inflame. The lungs, blood, brain and other organs, present, in general, the same alterations as are induced by the narcotics.

The reader must not, however, suppose that the lesions now described are the invariable results of the respective kinds of poison; on the contrary, a great variety in this respect has been noticed. Thus Marc, in a case of poisoning by arsenic, found the membranes of the stomach *thickened*, instead of *eroded*.‡ And what is still more extraordinary, there have been cases where the exhibition of acrid and corrosive poisons have left no marks of disease in the stomach or intestinal canal. Morgagni, Wepfer and Brunner, mention instances of

* Orfila's 'Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 171, 522.

† Christison, p. 578.

‡ Marc, p. 66.

this nature; and Sauvages speaks of a person who died suddenly after a violent epileptic fit, from swallowing fifteen berries of the sumach. Ten were ejected by vomiting, and the remaining five were found in the stomach after death. Notwithstanding this, the stomach exhibited no marks of lesion, nor was any other part of the body diseased. Etmuller mentions the following remarkable occurrence. A young girl having taken arsenic, vomited considerably during the night, and on the next morning was found dead. The skin was of a livid blue colour, but no appearances of disease could be found on dissection. There was no inflammation or gangrene present, yet in the stomach a white powder was observed, which, on being thrown on the coals, gave out a thick smoke with an arsenical odour. Powders containing a similar substance were found in the house, part of which was given to a dog, with fatal effects, and on dissection the stomach was found extensively inflamed. It is conjectured by the reporter, that the poison having been taken on a full stomach, may have prevented its usual chemical action.*

It has been supposed, in explanation of these anomalies, that such poisons as are given in the form of powder, will more readily cause destructive effects on the stomach, than those which are soluble. We are, however, not in possession of sufficient facts to explain satisfactorily the great variety that is occasionally observed; and experiments, so far as they have proceeded, do not permit us to assign that as the general cause.†

I will here suggest as a possible, much more than a probable occurrence, that the use of an innocent substance during life, may cause appearances of a suspicious nature on dissection. The following case from Foderé, will tend to illustrate this remark. A person at Chalons sur Marne, was just recovering from a severe sickness, and during his convalescence, took a gentle laxative, after the operation of which he suddenly died. He was supposed to have been poisoned through the negligence of the apothecary, and to ascertain this, the body was opened. The stomach and œsophagus were found

* Foderé, vol. 4, p. 272, 273.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 521.

red, and in some places livid, and resembling gangrene. Here the investigation stopped, and the patient was looked upon as evidently poisoned. M. Varnier, a physician at Châlons, knowing the exactness and prudence of the apothecary, felt, however, strong doubts concerning the cause of death, and on reflection, determined that the convalescence had been only an insidious respite. But it was necessary to assign a reason for the colour of the œsophagus and stomach, and having learnt that the deceased had been in the habitual use of a strong infusion of red poppies (*coquelicots*,) for some time, the idea struck him that this might be the cause. To ascertain the fact, he gave a similar infusion to a dog, and on dissection, found that the organs above mentioned were precisely of the same colour as on the body of the person supposed to be poisoned. So deep indeed was it, that it resisted repeated ablutions.*

The inference from this example is manifest—not to depend too much on a single phenomenon, in considering the question of poisoning, while at the same time it illustrates the necessity of inquiring into the person's food and medicaments.

In the general remarks on poisons, it was mentioned that they might be introduced into the system by means of injection, and I repeat it at this time, for the purpose of enforcing the direction of examining the whole intestinal canal from the mouth to the rectum. If the noxious substance be thrown up in this manner, it will of course be in vain to look for its indications in the stomach or smaller intestines.

The wife of a receiver general of taxes in the department of Arreige, was attacked some years since (in 1807) with a slight illness, which rapidly terminated in a severe and fatal one. On dissection, the intestines were found in a state of high inflammation. A servant girl was arrested on suspicion, and it appeared that she had mixed twenty-four grains of tartar emetic in the tisan or drink of her mistress, and afterwards had boiled an ounce of arsenic with the liquid prepared for an injection. Previous to her execution, she confessed, that not finding the tartar emetic sufficiently active, she administered the arsenic.†

* Foderé, vol. 4, p. 282.

† Foderé, vol. 4, p. 266.

But there is a more difficult case, somewhat connected with this point, which deserves the most deliberate investigation. It is the atrocious villany of introducing a poisonous substance after death, with a view of accusing an innocent person of the crime. Such an act is said to have been committed in Sweden, and it will readily occur, that if a corrosive substance be injected, it may produce a change sufficiently marked to lead the uninformed observer to the supposition that murder has been perpetrated.

So important a subject has not escaped the investigation of Orfila. He instituted experiments with corrosive substances on the dead bodies of men and dogs, and the result has established certain definite and fixed characters.* Several dogs were hung, and a short time after death a quantity of corrosive sublimate, in the form of powder, and in small fragments, was introduced into the rectum. On examination, the mucous coat of the intestine near the anus, exhibited several folds of a clear rose colour, but immediately above them, the rectum was of its natural colour, so that there was *a line of demarcation perfectly established between the parts to which the sublimate had been applied, and those which had not been in contact with it.* The same experiment performed on a living dog, presented, on dissection, an intense redness, which extended eight inches, *gradually* diminishing in intensity, and left no distinct line of demarcation. Similar effects were produced with arsenic. Verdigris, however, left no trace of demarcation or ulceration on the rectum of the dead dog, while it corroded the living parts. The sulphuric and nitric acids produced no other effect than their chemical one, and the lesions that indicate reaction in the system, such as inflammation and redness, were absent. Dr. Tartra found that he could produce on the dead, as well as on the living, that yellow or orange colour, which is the characteristic of nitric acid. The stomach was rendered rotten by it, but in all his experiments on the dead, the striking distinction was wanting, viz: the presence of more or less inflammation. It could only

* He did not deem it necessary to experiment with the narcotics or narcotico-acid, as the former do not produce any local lesion after death, and the latter only cause a slight degree of it.

commence on the living body. Lastly, Orfila ascertained, that when these poisons were introduced into the alimentary canal, twenty-four hours after death, they no longer excited redness or inflammation, because life is entirely destroyed in the capillary vessels. It is only when they are applied an hour or two after death, that the inflammatory phenomena, accompanied *with the line of demarcation*, are capable of occurring.*

As to slow poisons, in the sense already applied to that name, we may remark, that their peculiarities are very difficult to be distinguished. Foderé enumerates a long list of appearances, such as obstruction of the lymphatics, emptiness of the bloodvessels, a contraction and shrivelling of the viscera and marasmus,† but later and more minute observers contradict these.‡

Prince Charles of Augustenberg, Crown Prince of Sweden; and the predecessor of Bernadotte in that station, fell dead from his horse on the 22d of May, 1810, while reviewing troops in Scania. His death, during that stormy period of public affairs, excited great attention, and an opinion soon spread abroad that he had been poisoned. The king ordered a judicial investigation, and it appeared that Dr. Rossi, the physician of the late prince, had, without any directions, proceeded to inspect the body twenty-four hours after death; that he had performed this operation with great negligence, omitting many things which the law prescribed, which the assisting physicians proposed, and which were essential to render it satisfactory; and finally, that the coats of the stomach, instead of being preserved and submitted to chemical analysis, were, according to his own acknowledgment, thrown away. The royal tribunal adjudged him to be deprived of his appointment, and to be banished from the kingdom. This decision would not, of course, diminish the suspicion already excited; and among other physicians who were consulted on the case, M. Lodin, professor of medicine at Lynkoping, presented two memoirs, in which he stated it as his opinion that a *slow poison* of a vegetable nature, and probably analogous to the *aqua to-*

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 535 to 547. Foderé, vol. 4, p. 285.

† Foderé, vol. 4, p. 268.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 477.

fana, had been administered to the prince, and that this had caused the apoplectic fit. His reasons were, 1. That the prince had always enjoyed good health previous to his arrival in Sweden, and indeed had not been ill, until after eating a cold pie at an inn in Illaby. He was shortly after seized with violent vomiting, while the rest of the company experienced no ill effects. 2. The prince was naturally very temperate. 3. Ever since his arrival in Sweden, he had experienced a loss of appetite, with colic and diarrhœa; and 4. That on dissection, the spleen was found of a black colour, and in a state of decomposition, and the liver indurated and dark-coloured, whilst during life he had experienced no symptoms corresponding to these appearances. Dr. Lodin confessed, however, that he was unacquainted with the effects that indicate the administration of such a slow poison, but thought that the previous symptoms were such as might be expected from it.

For the credit of the profession, this conjectural opinion met with decided reprobation from other medical men. It appeared that the prince had, for several days previous, been subject to giddiness and pain in the head, and that all the symptoms were readily referable to a simple case of apoplexy; that on the day of his death, he had not taken any thing after he breakfasted; and an *interval of nearly four hours elapsed after that, till he fell from his horse*. The appearances on dissection also showed marks of long antecedent disease.*

In the conclusion of the last section, several diseases were mentioned that might be mistaken for the effects of poison. I shall now indicate certain circumstances which, if not properly understood, may lead to error, in examining the dead body.

1. *The vascularity or redness of the human stomach after death*, from natural causes, should not be confounded with the effects of poisoning. We are indebted to Dr. Yelloly for first calling the attention of physicians to this appearance, and also to the difficulty of discriminating it from the effects of irritation. This distinguished physician examined the stomachs of twenty individuals, among which number were five criminals

* Foderé, vol. 3, p. 20; vol. 4, p. 236. Christison, p. 46. Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 3, p. 315.

who were hanged, and in whom therefore the appearances of health were likely to be found. Not one of the whole number had any affection of the stomach while living. In all he observed a highly vascular state of the villous coat of the stomach in particular parts, (as about the pylorus and cardia,) with but two exceptions; in one of these, no vascularity was observed, and in the other it was obscure. In the five executed criminals, the vascularity amounted to a red or crimson hue. These appearances were distinct for a short time only after death, being most marked on the first day, and soon after, but at irregular periods, becoming more obscure. Dr. Yelloly infers, from these dissections, "that in the villous coat of the stomach, appearances of vascular fulness, whether florid or dark-coloured, in distinct vessels or in extravasations of different sizes, are not to be regarded as unequivocal marks of disease: they occur in every variety of degree and character, under every circumstance of previous indisposition, and in situations where the most healthy aspect of an organ might be fairly inferred; they are found in every part of the stomach, but principally in the posterior part of the great end, and in the lesser curvature; and they cover spaces of various extent, but are generally well defined, and terminate abruptly."*

MM. Rigot and Trousseau, and M. Billard, have pursued the investigation of this subject to a greater extent. The former have proved by experiment, that various kinds of pseudo-morbid redness may be formed, which cannot be distinguished from the parallel varieties caused by inflammation; that these appearances are produced after death, and not until three, five, or eight hours after it; that they are to be found chiefly in the most depending parts of the stomach, and turns of the intestines; and that after they have been formed, they may be made to shift their place, and appear where the membrane was previously healthy, by simply altering the position of the gut. M. Billard has described this redness through all its varied forms, and corroborates the fact of the extreme difficulty

* See Dr. Yelloly's paper, "On the vascular appearance in the human stomach, which is frequently mistaken for inflammation of that organ," in the *Med. Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 4, p. 371. See also *Edin. Med. and Surg. Jour.* vol. 10, p. 236.

of distinguishing between the morbid and pseudo-morbid redness of the inner coat of the alimentary canal.*

In connexion with this, it is proper to caution the examiner not to mistake the discoloration that is produced on the coats of the stomach and intestines, after some time, from the proximity of the liver or spleen. This may be of a reddish, brownish, yellowish or greenish tint. Let the case also be remembered, which I have just quoted, of coloured fluids actually dying these parts.

Dr. Christison is disposed to consider an appearance mentioned under the head of irritant poisons, as always the result of irritation, if not the irritation from poison only. "It is the effusion under the villous coat of the stomach, and incorporation with its substance of dark brownish, or as it were charred blood; which is thus altered either by the chemical action of the poison, or by a vital process." Great care should hence be used in searching for this, and it should not be confounded with the phenomena of redness now explained. So also we should particularly notice whether any effusion of lymph be present. This is also a sign of inflammation.

2. *Ulcers or perforations of the stomach and intestines*, occurring after death, or as the result of disease, have been mistaken for the effects of irritant poisons. In the commencement of our knowledge respecting them, that phenomenon, which is now styled, a *gelatinizing of the coats*, particularly attracted attention. It has been otherwise called *digestion of the stomach after death*. Its nature was first developed by the illustrious John Hunter. He found repeatedly on dissection, that the great end of the stomach was digested, and holes made in it. "To be sensible of this effect," says he, "nothing more is necessary, than to compare the inner surface of the great end of the stomach with any other part of the inner surface—what is sound will appear soft, spongy and granulated, and without distinct bloodvessels, opaque and thick;

* Christison, p. 119. See also the references at p. 19 of this volume; also a copious analysis of Billard on the healthy and diseased state of the alimentary mucous membrane, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 28, p. 164. We have reason to hope for a valuable addition to our knowledge on this subject, through the investigations of Drs. Hodgkin and Roupell. (See *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*, vol. 17, p. 442.)

while the other will appear thin, smooth, and more transparent, and the vessels will be seen ramifying in its substance, and upon squeezing the blood which they contain, from the larger branches into the smaller, it will be found to pass out at the digested ends of the vessels, and appear like drops on the inner surface." Again, he observes, "that when the stomach is actually perforated, the edges of this opening appear to be half dissolved, very much like to that kind of dissolution which fleshy parts undergo when half dissolved in a living stomach, or when dissolved by a caustic alkali, viz. pulpy, tender, and ragged." Lastly, he remarks, that he found these appearances more frequent in those who had died a violent death. He relates two cases of this kind, in which the persons had died shortly after having their skulls fractured, and a third one where a man had been hung.

The cause of this appearance of the stomach, is supposed by Mr. Hunter to be the action of the gastric juice on the coats of the stomach. And the reason why this effect is not produced during life, is, according to him, the constant resistance of the vital principle to its action. He also observes, that the power of the gastric juice is not confined to the stomach alone, since he has often noticed, that after it had dissolved the stomach in its usual place, the contents of the stomach would come in contact with the spleen and diaphragm, and partly dissolve the adjacent side of the spleen and diaphragm, so that the contents of the stomach were found in the cavity of the thorax, and had even affected the lungs in a small degree.*

Dr. Baillie's description of this phenomenon, is as follows: "In looking upon the coats of the stomach at its great end, a small portion of them frequently appears to be thinner, more transparent, and feels somewhat more pulpy than is usual; but these appearances are seldom very strongly marked. They arise from the action of the gastric juice resting on that part of the stomach in greater quantity than any where else, and dissolving a small portion of its coats. This is, therefore, not to be considered as a consequence of a disease, but as a natu-

* Hunter, in *Philosophical Transactions*. vol. 62.

ral effect arising from the action of the gastric juice, and the state of the stomach after death. When the gastric juice has been in considerable quantity, and of an active nature, the stomach has been dissolved quite through its substance at the great end, and its contents have been effused into the general cavity of the abdomen. In such cases, the neighbouring viscera are also partially dissolved. The instances, however, of so powerful a solution, are rare, and have almost only occurred in persons who, while in good health, had died suddenly from accident.”*

We shall, however, be mistaken, if we suppose that this occurrence is confined to such as expire suddenly, and in apparent health. Cases in great number have accumulated, of its being found in persons dying from diseases; and many French pathologists, indeed, are of opinion, that it is always a morbid process, constituting a peculiar complaint. It has, however, been found present in persons dead from very opposite ones, and in which there did not exist, during life, a single sign of disorder in the stomach.

Perforations of the stomach, intestines, and sometimes the gullet, have also frequently been noticed as the result of ulceration or schirrus. In some melancholy instances, rupture takes place, and the sufferings of the patient previous to death, are of the most severe nature.

The application of this subject in legal medicine, is the distinction between the perforation induced by corrosive poisons and those which, as we have stated, are the result of other agents. The following are the views of Chaussier.

“The causes which produce erosions and perforations of the stomach, are of two kinds; first, the destruction of a schirrous tumour, the progress of a cancerous ulcer; second, a morbid action of erosion, of ulceration which has commenced spontaneously at some point of the mucous lining of the stomach. The perforations of the first kind are not rare, but cannot easily be confounded with those which are the result of a caustic poison. Those of the second kind may be divided into acute and chronic; the first sometimes occurring in

* Baillie's Morbid Anatomy, American edition, p. 75.

a very short space of time. The following are the characters given by M. Chaussier: 'The ulcerations vary in size, shape and place; they occur particularly at the basis of the stomach, and the parts corresponding to the spleen and diaphragm. The contents of the organ are then sometimes effused into the abdomen or the thorax if the diaphragm be perforated, but most commonly there is no effusion, from the adhesion of the parts to those in the vicinity. If the adhesions be broken, a viscous, unctuous liquor, not fœtid, flows out; it has sometimes the odour of musk, is always brownish, and mixed with blackish flocculi, as though fine charcoal was added to a mucous serum. The edges are soft, fringed sometimes with a blackish line, more or less marked. Elsewhere the stomach retains its ordinary shape and consistence; it presents no appearance of thickening or inflammation; the capillaries of its mucous membrane appear, however, more developed, particularly in the vicinity of the perforation; this last sometimes forms in a few hours in people in health; most frequently after some days illness, and when no cause of external violence or poison can be suspected.' When the perforation is the result of a caustic, irritating poison, its edges are of the same thickness as the organ; sometimes they are hard and callous; in the spontaneous perforation the edges are thin, and formed only by the peritoneal membrane, the two other coats of the stomach being more extensively destroyed than the serous one. In this case, too, the opening is not so irregular as in that which results from the action of a corrosive substance. The circumference of perforations caused by nitric acid is yellow, from the chemical action of this substance. In the case of strong sulphuric acid, it is black. *Almost always when the perforation is the effect of poison, the parts not perforated are more or less inflamed*, while traces of the same affection are found in the mouth, the pharynx, and the intestinal canal; on the other hand, *for the most part in the case of spontaneous perforation, the unperforated parts present no appearance of inflammation*. This last character is not, however, constant; for, as on the one hand, perforations from poison are sometimes, though rarely, unattended by inflam-

mation of the unperforated parts of the intestinal canal, so on the other, spontaneous perforations may be observed, in which there is inflammation of the stomach and intestines.”*

Dr. Christison makes the following observations: “Passing now to the differences between these gelatinized perforations, and the perforations caused by the corrosive poisons, it may in the first instance, be observed, that the margin of a corroded aperture is commonly of a peculiar colour; for example, yellow with nitric acid, brown with sulphuric acid and the alkalies, orange with iodine. But a much better, probably an infallible criterion, and one of universal application, is the following. Either the person dies very soon after the poison is introduced, in which case vital action may not be excited in the stomach, or he lives long enough for the ordinary consequences of violent irritation to ensue. In the former case, as a large quantity of poison must have been taken, and much vomiting cannot have occurred, part of the poison will be found in the stomach; in the latter case, the poison may have been all ejected, but in consequence of the longer duration of life, deep vascularity or black extravasation must be produced round the hole, and sometimes too in other parts of the stomach, and these will at once distinguish the appearance from a spontaneous aperture. There is no doubt that the stomach may be perforated by the strong corrosives, and yet hardly any of the poison be found in the stomach after death. Thus, in a case by Mertzdorff, of poisoning by sulphuric acid, where life was prolonged for twelve hours, he could detect by minute analysis only $4\frac{1}{2}$ grains of the acid in the contents and tissue of the stomach. But then the hole was surrounded by signs of vital reaction, and so was the spleen upon which the aperture opened. Judging from what I have often seen in animals killed with oxalic acid, which is the most rapidly fatal of all the corrosives, so that little time is allowed for vital action, I should think that no poison can dissolve the stomach without unequivocal signs of violent irritation of the undissolved parts of the villous coat, which must secure an attentive observer from the mistake of confounding with such appearances the

* Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 3, p. 258.

effects of spontaneous erosion. Spontaneous erosion is very generally united with unusual whiteness of the stomach, and there is never any material vascularity.”*

Although the intestines and gullet have been found perforated from natural causes, it is not probable that this can hap-

* Christison, p. 123. The medical literature of this subject is so extensive, that I must content myself with a selection from the numerous authorities. Amongst others, the following are worthy of careful study.

Laisné. *Considerations Médico-légales sur les Erosions et Perforations spontanées de l'Estomac.*

Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 1, p. 311; vol. 2, p. 331. Dr. Gairdner on Erosions of the Alimentary Canal.

Allan Burns on Digestion of the Stomach after Death. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 132.)

Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, Articles *Perforations of Viscera*, and *Softening of Organs*, by Dr. Carswell; also the fifth fasciculus of the same author's *Illustrations of the Elementary Forms of Disease*, London, 1834; and his papers in vol. 34 of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal.

Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine, Art. *Organic Diseases of the Stomach*, by Dr. Houghton.

Cruveilhier's *Anatomic Pathologique*, Nos. 4 and 10, *Ramollissement gélatiniforme*. Orfila's *Exhumations Juridiques*, vol. 2, p. 216.

Dr. Abercrombie on Ulcerations of the Stomach, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 21: and in his work on *Diseases of the Stomach*.

Analysis of Andral's *Clinique Médicale*, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 23, p. 161; and also his *Pathological Anatomy*.

Copland's Dictionary, Art. *Lesions of the Digestive Canal*.

Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, Art. *Perforation*, by Percy and Laurent.

Cooke's Morgagni, vol. 2, p. 26.

Louis on Softening. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 6, p. 173.)

Dr. Ebermayer on Perforation. (American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 3, p. 452; vol. 4, p. 215.)

Broussais's Physiology.

Of cases, I will only refer to the following:

Dr. Haviland. *Annals of Philosophy*, N. S. vol. 4, p. 292.

Mr. Want. *Eclectic Repertory*, vol. 5, p. 495.

Dr. Pascalis. *New-York Medical Repository*, vol. 18, p. 287.

Dr. Cheeseman. *American Medical Recorder*, vol. 4, p. 151.

Dr. Segalas. *Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery*, vol. 2, p. 328.

Dr. Peter. *Ibid.* vol. 5, p. 297.

Dr. J. B. Beck. *New-York Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 2, p. 455.

Dr. A. L. Pierson. *New-England Journal*, vol. 15, p. 134.

Dr. Rawson, in *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 6, p. 391.

See also Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 483, 652; vol. 26, p. 290, 451; vol. 36, p. 445.

Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 8, p. 516; vol. 10, p. 240, 494; vol. 13, p. 461; vol. 14, p. 334; vol. 15, p. 530; vol. 23, p. 333.

American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 7, p. 522.

Dr. McCormac, in *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 9, p. 475.

Dr. Elliotson. *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 9, p. 379; vol. 12, p. 513.

Dr. Drake, in *Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences*, vol. 7, p. 506.

Of rupture of the stomach consequent on ulceration, &c. cases are given by Dr. Crampton and Mr. Travers, *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 8, p. 226; by Dr. Elliotson, *Ibid.* vol. 13; by Dr. Crampton, *Transactions of the King's & Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland*, vol. 1, p. 1.

pen from corrosive poisons. Indeed Dr. Christison states, that he has not met with a single case of either, in the course of his reading. As it respects the intestines, the poison will be either expelled in sufficient quantity from the stomach by vomiting, to prevent it, or the pylorus contracts and prevents the passage of every poison that is sufficiently concentrated to corrode. In the gullet the poison cannot remain a sufficient time to complete this alteration. It must either pass to the stomach or be rejected.

I shall conclude this chapter with a few general remarks on the chemical examination, and the mode of treatment, in cases of poisoning.

Chemical examination. I have already given directions as to the preservation of the stomach and intestines, and their contents, and the mode of pursuing experiments, for the purpose of detecting noxious substances. Under each individual poison, the most certain tests, so far as they are known, will be mentioned. And I will add, that it is in these directions that modern medical jurisprudence so much exceeds ancient forms. Nothing can be stronger proof, nothing will convict the criminal in a more satisfactory manner, than the discovery of the poison in the body of the deceased, and the subsequent detection of it by chemical tests.

In a number of cases the search may be unsuccessful, but we must not, therefore, conclude that poison has not been the cause of death. It may have been all discharged by vomiting and purging. Murder is frequently attempted by administering large doses of poison, and in some individuals, these produce copious vomitings, which indeed is often assisted by the deceased drinking copiously. Hence the chance of finding the poison is diminished, as it may have been rejected. Again, it may have all been absorbed. This has repeatedly occurred in cases where opium or laudanum has been known with certainty to have been taken, and yet no traces of it could be found. Some poisons also are decomposed. We shall see that this is the case with corrosive sublimate, lunar caustic, &c.

In all these cases, however, there is an additional investigation to be pursued, which may prove satisfactory. Although the poison is not present in a fluid or solid state in the contents of the stomach, yet it may exist in the tissues themselves, and hence, in repeated instances of late years, it has been detected by boiling down the stomach and intestines and experimenting on the fluids thus obtained.

How far putrefaction or decay of the body, renders the detection of poison impossible, has been satisfactorily answered by the experiments of Orfila and Leseur. They placed the following poisons, sulphuric and nitric acids, arsenic, corrosive sublimate, tartar emetic, sugar of lead, protomuriate of tin, blue vitriol, verdigris, lunar caustic, muriate of gold, acetate of morphia, muriate of brucia, acetate of strychnia, hydrocyanic acid, opium and cantharides, in the dead body, and allowed them to remain for some time.

They found that the acids became neutralized by the ammonia disengaged during the decay of animal matter; that by the action of the animal matter, the salts of mercury, antimony, copper, tin, gold, silver, and likewise the salts of the vegetable alkaloids, undergo chemical decomposition, in consequence of which the bases become less soluble in water, or altogether insoluble; that acids may be detected after several year's interment, not always however in the free state; that the bases of the decomposed metallic salts may also be found after interment for several years; that arsenic, opium and cantharides, undergo little change after a long interval of time, and are scarcely more difficult to discover in decayed than in recent animal mixtures; but that hydrocyanic acid disappears very soon, so as to be undistinguishable in the course of a few days.*

General outline of treatment in cases of poisoning. On this subject, I must necessarily be brief; yet a few directions for the recovery of persons labouring under this grievous affliction, can scarcely be here misplaced.

The great object, in all cases where it is practicable, is to administer antidotes; and of these, the chemical are the most

* Christison, p. 58. Orfila's *Exhumations Juridiques*, vol. 2, p. 265. A detailed account of these experiments is given in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 31, p. 224, and *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 3, p. 226.

striking and satisfactory in their operation. We are altogether indebted to modern observers, and to Orfila in particular, for most of these. Thus the virtues of albumen as an antidote for corrosive sublimate and verdigris—of bark for tartar emetic—of the alkaline sulphates for sugar of lead—of the alkaline and earthy chlorides for liver of sulphur—of ammonia and chlorine for prussic acid, have been pointed out.

For some of the divisions of poisons, however, antidotes are not to be found; and the grand indication, as indeed in all cases, is to remove the poison as soon as possible, by exciting the action of the stomach to discharge them, or by the application of mechanical means. For the former, emetics are the most efficient; and among the latter may be named, the stomach pump. In other places I will speak of its history, and mention instances in which it has been found useful. At present I will only add, that unfortunately it is not always applicable. The poison sometimes acts too rapidly, and on other occasions, is too destructive to parts, to permit its use. Still it is often valuable; but it requires caution and experience, so that additional injury be not inflicted through its employment.

In cases of external poisoning, Sir David Barry has of late years revived the application of cupping glasses to the part where the poison has been introduced, and in several cases it has proved useful. It prevents the absorption of the poison, and may, by abstracting blood from the wound, also withdraw the poison.*

Another mode, proposed for the same object, is the application of a ligature between the injured part and the trunk, so as to check the circulation. Bouillaud has shown the efficacy of this in several experiments, while Verniere has combined venesection with it. The veins between the wound and liga-

* On this subject, and Sir David Barry's Experiments in particular, see London Medical Repository, vol. 25, p. 176. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 25, p. 462; vol. 27, p. 200.

Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 9, p. 313.

Dr. Pennoek's Experiments on the *modus operandi* of cupping glasses, in arresting and preventing the effects of poisoned wounds, in American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 2, p. 9. Dr. Pennoek inclines in favour of *increased pressure* as the cause of their efficacy.

Dr. Rodrigues' Experiments on ditto, Amer. Jour. of Med. Sciences, vol. 2, p. 307.

ture are opened, and the blood which has passed through or near the poisoned part, is thus discharged.*

* Bouillaud, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 28, p. 227. *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 10, p. 232. *Bulletin des Sciences Médicales*, v. 11, p. 118. Verniere, *Journal des Progres*, vol. 3, p. 121. *Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Journal*, vol. 29, p. 450. *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 14, p. 248.

A curious paper, on the Statistics of Poisoning in France, has been recently published in the *Journal de Chimie Médicale*, by Chevallier and Boys de Loury. The following is a brief abstract of it:

In seven years, (from 1824 to 1832,) 273 individuals have been accused of poisoning; of these, 171 were acquitted, and 102 condemned. The substances employed were, in 93 cases, as follows:

54 cases arsenic,	1 case tartar emetic,
7 " verdigris,	1 " opium,
5 " cantharides,	1 " acetate of lead,
5 " corrosive sublimate,	1 " white lead,
4 " nux vomica,	1 " sulphuric acid,
3 " fly-powder,	1 " sulphate of zinc,
2 " nitric acid,	1 " mercurial ointment,
1 " sulphuret of arsenic,	5 " unknown.

In 31 cases, the poison was given in 34 instances in soup; 8 in milk; 7 in flour, 7 in wine; 8 in bread; 5 in pastry; 4 in chocolate; 4 in medicine; 2 in coffee; 2 in an unmixed state. (*London Med. Gaz.* vol. 16, p. 114. *Lancet*, N. S. v. 16, p. 33.)

CHAPTER XVII.

IRRITANT POISONS.

Division of irritant poisons into six orders. 1. THE ACIDS, and their bases. Sulphuric acid—its effects on man—appearances on dissection—chemical proofs—whether the last should be deemed indispensable for conviction—medico-legal cases—treatment. Nitric acid—effects—Tartra's arrangement of them—appearances on dissection—tests—antidotes. Muriatic acid. Acetic acid—case of poisoning with it. Oxalic acid—symptoms—appearances on dissection—tests—antidotes. Phosphorus—effects—appearances on dissection—phosphorous acid. Iodine—effects—tests—treatment; hydriodate of potash—effects—tests. Bromine—hydrobromate of potash—tests. 2. THE ALKALIES, and their salts. Potash; subcarbonate of potash—effects—appearances on dissection—antidote; nitrate of potash—effects—treatment. Soda. Ammonia—hydrochlorate of ammonia. Quicklime—oxymuriate of lime. Hydrogenated sulphuret of potash (liver of sulphur)—poisonous effects—antidote. Sulphuret of soda.

IRRITANT poisons are divided by Dr. Christison into five orders or groups, as follows: The acids, and their bases; the alkalies, and their salts; the metallic compounds; the vegetable and animal irritants; and the mechanical irritants. To these I will add the acrid gases.

In pursuing this arrangement, we shall consider, under the **FIRST ORDER**, the following substances:

Sulphuric acid,	Phosphorus,
Nitric acid,	Iodine,
Muriatic acid,	Hydriodate of potash,
Acetic acid,	Bromine,
Oxalic acid,	Hydrobromate of potash.

And under the **SECOND ORDER**,

Potash,	Muriate of ammonia,
Subcarbonate of potash,	Quicklime,
Nitrate of potash,	Oxymuriate of lime,
Soda,	Liver of sulphur,
Ammonia,	Sulphuret of soda.

I. *The Acids.*

SULPHURIC ACID, (oil of vitriol.) That this substance should sometimes be the cause of death, may readily be conjectured; but it requires some acquaintance with human folly and wickedness, to believe that it could be thought of as the instrument of suicide, and even of murder. Such is, however, too certainly the fact.*

The following are some cases illustrative of its effects:

Joseph Parangue, a soldier, about the end of January, 1798, between seven and eight in the morning, swallowed by mistake, a glass of sulphuric acid, imagining it to be brandy. He drank it off at once, with his head back, and poured it from a distance into his mouth. By this means, he did not discover his mistake until he drew his breath. He was instantly conveyed to the hospital, and Dr. Desgranges being at hand, immediately saw him. Excessive vomiting, convulsive agitations of the muscles of the face, violent cramp in the stomach, and an acrid burning heat in the throat and œsophagus

* In 1808, a female was tried and convicted at Edinburgh, for the murder of her natural child, aged eighteen months, by pouring sulphuric acid down its throat. — (Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 1, part 2, p. 4.)

In 1819, another at Exeter, (England,) also for poisoning her child. (Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence, p. 218.)

In 1817, a female was tried in this State, for poisoning an illegitimate child.

In 1824, Richard Overfield was condemned and executed at Shrewsbury, (England,) for the murder of his infant child three months old. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 122.)

In 1828, a man was convicted at Strasburg, for attempting to poison his wife. (Ibid. vol. 34, p. 213.)

In 1830, a Mrs. Humphrey, at Aberdeen, was convicted and executed, for murdering her husband. A full account of the trial is given by Dr. Christison, in Ibid. vol. 35, p. 298.

In 1831, a stepfather at Manchester, for the murder of his child. Case related by Dr. Sinclair, Ibid. vol. 36, p. 99.

Its fatal wilful administration is thus not only a capital offence by the laws of all civilized countries, but its external application, so as to do some serious injury, is, by a special statute in Scotland, made punishable by death. This enactment originated in the quarrels between masters and workmen in Glasgow, regarding the rate of wages; and the crime became so frequent as to render a law necessary. The clause is as follows: "If any person shall wilfully, maliciously, and unlawfully throw at, or otherwise apply to any of his majesty's subjects, any sulphuric acid or other corrosive substance, calculated by external application to burn or injure the human frame, with intent in so doing, or by means thereof, to murder, maim, or disfigure or disable such subject, or with intent to do some other grievous bodily harm," and if such intent is accomplished, the person convicted shall suffer death. Of course, throwing the acid so as to injure or destroy the dress merely, would not be capital. Under this act, a female (Macmillan) was convicted in 1828. I shall notice this case hereafter.

were present. The body was icy cold; the pulse small, concentrated and irregular, and the breathing difficult. The carbonate of magnesia suspended in water, was administered with considerable relief; and although vomiting returned once, yet by the continuance of this remedy, the anxiety and pain diminished, the pulse rose, and a genial heat was diffused over the body. The antiphlogistic regimen and diluents were subsequently required to remove the consequences of this potation. The whole of the mouth and throat was found, on the subsequent day, excoriated and covered with eschars; the epiglottis swelled; and on the fourth day, a slough from the uvula almost threatened suffocation. This gradually came away, and he finally recovered, but a painful sensibility of the throat and stomach remained for a length of time, especially when he ate hastily, or used food that was indigestible.*

A female swallowed some for the purpose of destroying herself, and in four hours thereafter was brought to the Hotel Dieu. Pain, coldness of the skin, constipation and inquietude were present, with copious and repeated vomitings of a deep blue coloured and glairy fluid. Proper remedies were given, but the symptoms increased in severity. On the second day, the face appeared greatly deranged, the cold on the surface increased, the pulse became insensible in the wrists and carotids; the breath was extremely fœtid; a few drops of very high coloured urine escaped from time to time, and the disquietude and agitation were extreme. She could not bear any kind of covering, and the region of the stomach was exquisitely sensible to the slightest touch. On the fourth day, she was incapable of resting a single instant in the same position, and rose up, for the purpose of going to a cold place. Death finally relieved her on the fifth day, and she preserved her reason to the last.†

In one instance quoted from Tulpius, a miliary eruption appeared over the whole body, in addition to the ordinary symptoms.

Its effects on an infant are illustrated by an instance that

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 315. Foderé, vol. 4, p. 96.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 320, quoted from Tartra.

occurred to Dr. Bateman. A mother, by mistake, administered about a teaspoonful to her child, aged two and a half years. This was at half past four P. M. She immediately excited vomiting by putting her finger in the child's throat, and the matter brought up resembled coffee grounds. It seemed to suffer little pain, except when vomiting, which occasioned crying, and it died easily, and almost unperceived, at nine the same evening.*

These cases (particularly the first and second,) give a full view of the symptoms ordinarily observed, and it is therefore not necessary to repeat them.

An extraordinary case of voluntary injection of sulphuric acid into the vagina, for the purpose of inducing abortion, is said to have lately happened in France. The result was extensive inflammation and a complete obliteration of the vagina. When delivery came on, the cæsarean operation was required, but both mother and child perished.†

Appearances on dissection. In the case of a female, related by Tartra, the abdominal viscera were for the most part œde-

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 10, p. 257. In addition to the above, I will refer to such cases as I have noted.

London Medical Repository, vol. 14, p. 160. Two cases, from a German Journal, one of suicide, and the other accidental. The former died in a few hours; the latter survived two months.

Chapman's Journal, vol. 8, p. 218. A chronic case, which ended in a stricture of the œsophagus. After two years' suffering, the patient died of hunger. This is quoted from the *Bulletin de la Société Médicale D'Emulation*.

London Medical Repository, vol. 27, p. 550. Death in fifteen days. Case by Dr. Lebidois. *Archives Générales*.

Littel's Journal of Foreign Medicine, vol. 1, p. 313, by Dr. Robert. Death in sixty-eight days. This is also a French case.

London Medical Gazette, vol. 11, p. 813, by Dupuytren. Died in seven hours.

Ibid, vol. 14, p. 30, by Louis, at Hospital de la Pitié—survived two months.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 99, by Dr. Sinclair—survived fifty-five hours.

Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 1, p. 340, by Mr. Hebb—died in a few hours.

Dr. Roupell, Illustration 5—death in 12 hours.

Cases of recovery. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 221. (from Horn's Journal). A female aged 19—a tetanic affection continued for some days, and the lining membrane of the mouth was separated and discharged.

New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 7, p. 563, by Dr. Stewart.

London Medical Gazette, vol. 3, p. 253, by Mr. Orr.

Ibid, vol. 3, p. 687.

Ibid, vol. 14, p. 488, by Dr. Wilson—was alive at the end of six months.

London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 4, p. 119, quoted from Dr. Rust.

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 8, p. 38.

matous, and the coats of the duodenum in several points nearly dissolved. The stomach externally showed great distention, was of a dark colour, and exhibited several spots indicative of deep disorganization. The mucous membrane of the œsophagus was burnt, blackish and partly detached. The stomach contained a dark and very fœtid fluid, similar to what she had vomited, and it was much thickened in some points, and corroded in others. The internal coat was entirely dissolved, and reduced to a state of mucus throughout the greatest part of its extent. The pylorus presented the most decided marks of disorganization; its coats were black and puffed up, and almost closed the orifice. The duodenum and jejunum were partly destroyed and burnt, and attacked with sphacelus, and the whole of the intestinal canal partook more or less of the injury.

In Dr. Bateman's case, the omentum was seen converted into a black pulpy mass, but still possessing sufficient tenacity to retain the food which had escaped from the stomach. There was also in the omentum a small quantity of dark-coloured fluid, similar to what had been vomited. In the stomach, there was an erosion or aperture about three inches in diameter, bordered by thickened edges of a dark-brown cinder-like appearance. The œsophagus, with the exception of a slight purple blush, showed no marks of disease. There was an appearance of inflammation towards the cardia, but none towards the pylorus. The intestines were free from inflammation, although they were strongly marked with transverse corrugated rings.

In the other cases referred to, the appearances varied with the length of time that the patient survived after taking the poison. When some months had elapsed, the stomach was sometimes seen extremely contracted, and its membranes thickened. Indeed, all the results of severe and long continued inflammation, have occurred, not only in this part, but in the œsophagus, throat, &c. Any peculiarities that have sometimes been noticed, will be mentioned under the head of nitric acid, as the effects of both are in many respects similar.

Professor Carus relates the following remarkable circum-

stance. A woman at the completion of the full time of utero-gestation, poisoned herself with concentrated sulphuric acid. She concealed the deed till the instant of her death, when the last efforts of nature were employed in the expulsion of the child. On dissection, the acid was found in the cavity of the pleura of the fœtus, in that of the peritoneum, in the heart, the bladder, and even in the water of the amnios.*

Effects on animals. It would certainly seem unnecessary to ascertain the effects of the injection of sulphuric acid into the veins, since, so far as I can ascertain, no practical purpose is to be gained by it.† Orfila has however instituted some experiments in this way. It caused instant death, by coagulating the blood. When introduced into the stomach, it killed by the inflammation and disorganization of that organ, and when applied to the skin, by the burn that it produced, or the supuration of which it was the consequence.

The other acids (nitric, muriatic, phosphoric, fluoric, &c.) acted in a similar manner. It will therefore not be necessary to notice this head again, unless there is something peculiar to be mentioned.

Chemical proofs. If there are any instances of poisoning, in which the appearances found on dissection, are to be deemed of greater weight than the chemical proofs, it is in the case of poisoning by the mineral acids. Their effects are so striking and so little liable to be mistaken for natural appearances, that a doubt can hardly arise.‡ The necessity of relying on these is increased by the difficulty of satisfactorily detecting the presence of the acid in all cases. I shall mention the tests recommended by Professor Christison and others, and then state some medico-legal cases that have occurred in England and France.

* Bulletin Des Sciences Médicales vol. 13, p. 72.

† And particularly as Fracassiti performed the same experiments, with similar results, one hundred and fifty years ago. See Philosophical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 490.

‡ "Thus," says Dr. Christison, "what fallacy can intervene to render the following opinion doubtful? There were vesicles and brown streaks on the lips, neck and shoulders, similar to the effects of burning, almost total separation of the lining membrane of the mouth, throat, epiglottis, and gullet: perforation of the stomach, with a margin half an inch wide, which was extensively charred and surrounded by a red areola. From these appearances alone, Mertzdorf declared that the child must have been poisoned by sulphuric acid." (Christison, p. 164.)

When concentrated, its peculiar appearance, its corrosive power, its action on litmus, and the heat induced by the addition of water, serve to distinguish it.

When diluted, add pure nitric acid and subsequently a solution of the nitrate of barytes. A heavy white precipitate, consisting of sulphate of barytes, falls down. This may be collected, filtered and dried, and then mixed with a little charcoal powder and exposed to heat in a platinum spoon. Sulphuret of barium is thus formed. If we add water to this, and afterwards a little muriatic acid, and then present over the mixture a bit of white paper, moistened with acetate or nitrate of lead, the sulphuretted hydrogen from the decomposed sulphuret, will blacken the paper.

When mixed with animal and vegetable matter. If it be required to analyze the *stains on clothes*, we should first ascertain whether any sourness be present. This is found to continue for a length of time after the acid has been applied. Then cut out the stained spots, boil them in distilled water, test the acidity of the fluid by litmus, and afterwards apply nitric acid and nitrate of barytes as above directed. If there are indications of sulphuric acid, the next question is, whether this is free or combined with a base in the form of a neutral salt.

In analyzing the contents of the stomach, many sources of fallacy arise from the combination of the acid with its contents, or with portions of the animal membrane. It is known that free acids, as the muriatic and acetic, exist in the stomach, and the difficulty of discrimination is thus greatly increased. Instead, therefore, of quoting in detail the process of Dr. Christison, for ascertaining whether the acid is combined with a base, or in other words, whether a sulphate has been the cause, I will content myself with referring to his work, and will only recommend, that if the appearances on dissection, in combination with the tests of the presence of sulphuric acid, in some one or other form, in the stomach, do not suffice to indicate poisoning by it, not to rely on any additional experiments. I am justified in this advice, I apprehend, from the observations of Christison, Devergié and Orfila.*

* Christison, p. 143. Devergié in *Annales D'Hygiene*, vol. 2, p. 213. Orfila in *Ibid.* vol. 10, p. 126. *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 132.

What testimony has been considered sufficient for conviction, will be seen by a review of some trials. In Overfield's case, the child, three months old, was in perfect health at 8, A. M. Between 11 and 12 o'clock, the mother was heard to scream, and a witness on entering the house, found the infant in great agony. It was immediately taken to the surgeon. The lips were white and shrivelled, and had small blisters on them. The child's clothes, made of dyed cotton, had some red spots on them, and the surgeon on applying his lips to these, found an extremely acid taste. It died at 3, P. M. The inside of the mouth and the gullet were blistered and their inner lining corroded. So also the great curvature of the stomach, which resembled wet brown paper. A pint of bloody fluid was obtained, and which was found to contain sulphuric acid. Overfield was a workman in a carpet manufactory, and had access to the factory stores of sulphuric acid. He was convicted and executed.*

Mrs. Macmillan at Edinburgh threw some sulphuric acid over Archibald Campbell on the 17th of October, 1827. The skin on the left side of the face was partially removed. The left eye-ball was injured, and both eyelids inflamed and swollen. The skin of the inside of the lips was white and swollen, as was also the back of the left hand. Campbell was brought to the infirmary in great pain, which was relieved by proper applications. Soon, however, the pain in the eye extended to the head; venesection, &c. proved of little avail, and the cornea burst. To this followed inflammation of the vein in which he had been bled, severe fever and symptoms of pulmonary inflammation. He died on the 30th.

On dissection, there were found marks of inflammation in the veins, lungs and pleura, with serous effusion.

Mrs. Macmillan was indicted under the recent Scotch Statute. A hat, stock and sleeve of a coat injured by the acid, were examined by Drs. Christison and Turner. Portions of each, after being divided into small fragments, were boiled with distilled water. The filtered fluid had an acid taste, reddened litmus, and yielded with acetate of barytes, a copious

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 322.

brownish precipitate, which was rendered white by nitric acid. This precipitate when dried, was mixed with a little charcoal and heated. On adding muriatic acid, sulphuretted hydrogen was emitted, which blackened a paper dipped in acetate of lead.

Mrs. Macmillan was convicted, but as this was the first case under the new act, she was only condemned to perpetual banishment.*

Mrs. Humphrey, a butcher's wife at Aberdeen, was tried there for murdering her husband, by pouring sulphuric acid down his throat while asleep. The circumstantial evidence was very strong, that she alone could have given it to him. He was in a state of intoxication on going to bed, and after some hours, the servant who had gone to see him, at the request of her mistress, found him complaining of burning in his throat, and he said that he awoke suddenly with these symptoms. Frothing and difficulty in swallowing and speaking followed. On attempting to take some milk, it returned curdled. When seen by a surgeon, all the marks of the action of a corrosive substance were present. He continued to labour under its effects, gradually sinking, and finally died in 47 hours from the commencement of his illness. On dissection, two brownish marks were seen at the corners of his mouth, and the gums and part of the inside of the lips were of an almost milky whiteness. The back part of the tongue had lost its investing membrane, and was of a red colour, while its fore part was covered with a whitish brown crust. The pharynx had a similar appearance. The membrane covering the epiglottis was ash coloured, much thickened, and in some places detached. The stomach was overspread with numerous erosions and ulcerations. It contained about three ounces of a thick, reddish liquid, but no sulphuric acid could be detected in it, nor in that obtained from the intestines. But pieces of a blanket, a bed cover, a sheet and a shirt, used or worn by the deceased on the night of his illness, all presented various stains and corroded spots, and on the application of tests, exhibited marks of the presence of sulphuric acid. Other portions were

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 31, p. 229. Syme's *Justiciary Reports*, p. 289.

sent to Dr. Christison, who examined them seven weeks after the man's illness commenced, and corroborated the opinion of the physicians of Aberdeen. The female was convicted, and before execution confessed her guilt.*

In a French case of an infant poisoned by oil of vitriol, parts of the clothes and other articles on which the acid had fallen, were treated with water, and then tested with the hydrochlorate (muriate) of barytes, and they gave abundant precipitates. A portion of the skin, of the lower lip and of the tongue, when washed in water, made it distinctly acid. So also the matters vomited, when treated with distilled waters and filtered, gave a precipitate with muriate of barytes; but neither the liquid contained in the stomach, nor portions of the stomach itself, gave any marked indications. The examiners, (Guersent, Chevallier, Barruel and Denis,) notwithstanding, gave it as their opinion, that the child had been poisoned by sulphuric acid.†

In a recent examination of the stomach of a suicide, with its contents, by Devergie and Taufflier, they experienced the difficulties already indicated, of establishing the presence of free sulphuric acid by processes now in use, and as a substitute, employed the *iodic acid*, in the following manner: The stomach having been boiled in distilled water, was now heated to redness in a glass vessel, in order to produce decomposition, and to the neck of this vessel was attached a receiver, containing a solution of ammonia. In order to ascertain whether this fluid held any sulphite of ammonia, a few drops of a solution of iodic acid, to which starch had already been added, (and a drop of hydrochloric acid to neutralize the ammonia,) were poured into it. The mixture turned immediately of a blue colour. This result proved to us, says the reporters, that a certain portion of sulphuric acid was present in the receiver, and that the experiment had changed the sulphite into the sulphate of ammonia, the oxygen of the iodic acid being given off to it, while the iodine thus rendered free, gives its characteristic effect on starch. On pursuing the experiment with

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 35, p. 298 to 316.

† Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 4, p. 205. A case in which a large quantity of sulphuric acid was added to coffee, for the purpose of poisoning a man and his wife, is stated by Barruel, in Ibid. vol. 9, p. 392. He applied the test already recommended.

various portions of the suspected fluid, the compound procured was treated with barytes, and gave its white precipitate. The iodate of barytes was decomposed by heat, while the residue, after the usual manipulations, was found to be sulphate of barium.*

Treatment. Water containing calcined magnesia in suspension, must be instantly administered; or if this cannot be procured, chalk and water, or soap and water. The caustic must thus be neutralized, or the patient is lost. In an emergency, Dr. Christison advises, that the lime from a white-washed apartment be taken, and beat down into a thin paste with water, and thus given. Milk or mild diluents, are also proper at this time. The subsequent treatment must depend on the degree of inflammation present.

NITRIC ACID. We are indebted to Dr. Tartra of Paris, for an able and comprehensive essay on this substance as a poison; and from the extracts given by Orfila, and a most instructive analysis contained in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, I have taken the following particulars.†

Dr. Tartra arranges the cases of poisoning by nitric acid, into four classes. 1. When the death is speedy, for it is never sudden; it commonly takes place from the primary effects in about twenty-four hours, varying from six to forty-eight hours. 2. When it proves fatal from its secondary effects, at various distances of time, from fifteen days to some years. 3. When death does not take place, but the recovery is imperfect. 4. When a perfect cure is sooner or later obtained.

1. The following example will give a tolerable idea of the progress of the symptoms in the first case. A man driven by distress to commit suicide, under the greatest agitation of mind, and upon an empty stomach, swallowed at a draught, two ounces of concentrated nitric acid. Instantly he was seized with the most excruciating pains and agitations, and could not lie in bed, but rolled himself upon the floor. Vomit-

* Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 13, p. 427.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 329 to 360; vol. 2, p. 560. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 9, p. 369. Review of "*Traité de l'empoisonnement par l'acide nitrique*, par A. E. Tartra, médecin. Paris, 1802." I have subsequently obtained the work itself, but find nothing to add.

ing came on, accompanied by general sensation of coldness, especially in the extremities. Every time he vomited, the matter effervesced upon the pavement. He got a solution of soap and oil. In two hours he was brought to the hospital; and upon the road, he frequently vomited, and stopped to drink. On his arrival, he got emollient drinks, especially linseed tea, in great abundance. He was in continual agitation, and his countenance very much altered; he vomited every instant a blackish glairy matter; he opened his mouth easily, and his tongue was white, with a tinge of yellow; he had acute pains in his mouth, along the œsophagus, and in his stomach; his belly, slightly tense, could not bear the slightest pressure, it so excessively augmented his pains. The surface of his body was cold; his pulse small, concentrated and frequent; he had hiccup, and his respiration was laborious. His symptoms increased; he uttered sighs and lamentations; his limbs became icy; a cold sweat covered his whole body; his pulse was almost imperceptible, and the pain was constant. Still he could rise, and make continual and useless efforts to quench his thirst, and satisfy his urgent desire to make water and go to stool. He continued in this state during the night. The matter vomited became more clear, and of a yellow colour. He at last made a few drops of urine. The shocking appearance of his body already resembled that of a corpse, but he retained his senses, and was speaking when he expired. nineteen hours after swallowing the acid.

The burning heat and pains which are commonly the immediate effects of nitric acid when swallowed, present striking contrasts. In general, they are not in proportion to the quantity or strength of the acid swallowed. Often, persons who have taken only a small dose, are seized with the most excruciating and dreadful pains; while some of those who have swallowed a great quantity, two or three ounces for example, have had scarcely any suffering, but remained very tranquil. In the first case, the patients either recover, or survive a long time; in the second, speedy death is almost always the consequence. Thus a young man of twenty died in twenty hours, without any agitation or signs of acute pain. On opening the

body, the highest degree of disorganization appeared — perforations of the stomach, and great effusion of its contents into the abdomen.

A woman said she had taken nitric acid, but she seemed so little affected by it, that many thought she was imposing on them. There was no agitation, no pain or vomiting; but the smallness of the pulse, lassitude and prostration of strength, rather indicated a typhus fever. Next day she died; and on examining the body, there was found to be the greatest degree of disorganization that nitric acid is capable of producing; perforation of the stomach, gangrenous spots, effusion into the abdomen, marked corrosion of all the viscera, and general yellow colour.

But when the acid, from deficient quantity or strength, only acts on the mucous membranes, then it does not always prove fatal; but the pains are excessive, the colic dreadful. In the one case, the sensibility seems to be annihilated: in the other, excited in the highest degree. Here, as on many other occasions, the pain is to a certain degree proportionate to the severity of the affection, but after a certain point it seems rather to be in an inverse ratio.

Out of fifty-six cases, death from the primary effects took place in nineteen.

2. The second variety of the progress and termination of poisoning by nitric acid, exhibits at first, the same phenomena as the preceding. But less alarming symptoms succeed by degrees, anxiety, irregular fever, dryness of the skin, spasmodic constriction of the extremities, wandering vague pains, deep and difficult inspirations, dryness of the tongue and throat, excessive thirst, deep pain in the region of the stomach, habitual tension of the abdomen, obstinate costiveness, vomiting less frequent, a kind of copious salivation, uneasiness in the throat from the imperfect detachment of the flakes of the membrane lining it, portions of it still partially adhering, frequently floating in the pharynx, and disturbing both respiration and deglutition.

The pulse is often miserable, and the slow fever has no remission; the cold continues over the surface of the body, and

there are irregular fits of shivering occasionally. Every kind of food, solid or liquid, is vomited. Milk alone seems to agree with the stomach. After some time, the inner membrane of the alimentary canal detaches itself in portions, which are discharged by vomiting, with floods of frothy and intolerably fœtid saliva. Membranous flakes, swelled, rotten, and often of a very great size, are frequently pulled out of the mouth. This state lasts, in some cases, only about a fortnight, generally several months, and occasionally for years. But these persons uniformly fall into complete marasmus, as the digestive organs are totally deranged, and before death, they are often reduced to a skeleton.

This variety occurred in *seven* of the *twenty-nine* cases now first described by Dr. Tartra, and he accounts plausibly enough for its having been seldom observed before, by supposing, that when persons who had swallowed nitric acid, had got the better of the primary symptoms, they were lost sight of, and the subsequent affection was not imputed to the proper cause.

Such in general is the progress, when patients die of the secondary symptoms; but in the case of a female it was considerably different, as well as the appearances on dissection. The constipation was not very great; the expectoration did not last long, and the vomiting was rare; but a fixed pain at the bottom of the thorax, accompanied by difficulty of breathing, and spitting of blood, deceived the medical attendants who were not acquainted with the fact of her having drunk nitric acid. She was treated as if for pectoral complaints, and died in about sixty days after having swallowed the poison.

In this case alone, the body was not remarkably emaciated. The stomach was only a little contracted, and adhered in several places, especially to the liver and spleen. It contained a mass of solid blood, of a dark red colour, the size of a fist, moulded to the shape of the stomach, and covered by a very fine membrane, which seemed to be either the mucous membrane detached from the stomach, in several places, or perhaps a membrane of new formation. The intestinal canal, in this case, was of the usual size. Death seemed to have

taken place before the gradual consumption had wasted the body.

3. The third variety of termination is in imperfect recovery. This is also very frequent, and is characterized by the same train of symptoms with what we have now described, but very inferior in degree. The exfoliation of the œsophagus and stomach, either takes place but once or only a few times. A slow and progressive amendment ensures the safety of the patient. But there still remains some complaint: obscure pains in the throat, and especially in the epigastric region; habitual constipation, occasional vomiting, and increased sensibility of the stomach, so that that organ can only support light nourishment and bland liquors. In short, they continue invalids during the rest of their lives; they are subject to repeated and even habitual indispositions, and sometimes to pain and insupportable heat of the stomach. But they are able to follow their occupations, and long survive their poisoning. Dr. Tartra has met with *eight* examples of this termination of the disease, in fifty-six cases.

4. The total disappearance of the symptoms produced by swallowing nitric acid, or complete and absolute recovery without leaving any consequences, is the last variety of termination. Of fifty-six cases, the recovery seemed to be complete in *twenty-one*.

One or two circumstances additional may be added, on the authority of Dr. Christison. The marks on the lips, skin, &c. where the acid has touched, are at first white, but shortly become, if from nitric acid, yellowish, and if from sulphuric, brownish. Again, there are undoubtedly some cases of poisoning, where the injury is confined to the gullet and neighboring parts. Dysphagia has thus happened for a time, and inflammation and spasm of the glottis and larynx may occur, and cause a fatal result, without any affection of the stomach. Instances are quoted where the morbid appearances were confined to the above parts and the stomach was healthy, and yet no doubt existed of the poisoning.*

Appearances on dissection. When the patients die of the

* Christison, p. 154, 157.

primary effects of nitric acid, the external appearance of the body presents no alteration; every part is sound and natural, and presents in a certain degree the firmness and freshness of life. The epidermis of the margin of the lips has commonly an orange colour, more or less deep. It seems burnt, and separates very easily. Sometimes yellow spots are discovered on the hands and other parts of the body, caused by the contact of nitric acid. A yellow fluid, in some cases very abundant, flows from the mouth and nostrils, and the belly is considerably distended with air.

The alimentary canal is remarkably affected. All the internal membrane of the mouth is burnt, and has sometimes a white, but more commonly a yellow colour. It is separated in some places and adheres in others. The teeth are often loose, and have a very marked yellow colour at their crown. The mucous membrane of the pharynx exhibits the same change, or is in a state of inflammation of a dirty red colour. The whole extent of the œsophagus is lined with a dense mass of a fine yellow colour, dry on its surface, unctuous and greasy to the touch, and which seems to be formed both of the mucous membrane, altered in a particular manner, and of the albumen contained in the viscid fluid which exudes from the membrane of the œsophagus, solidified by the nitric acid.* This lining adheres in very few points, and is easily detached from the other membranes of the œsophagus, which are brown and bloodshot.

When the stomach is not perforated, it has commonly a considerable size. Externally, its membranes are slightly and partially inflamed, but very much towards the pylorus, and beginning of the duodenum. Its colour is faded, livid, of a yellowish green, with large gangrenous spots. It adheres every where to the neighbouring parts, the diaphragm, liver, spleen and transverse arch of the colon, by means of concrete lymphatic exudation. Its sides, which are

* Dr. Arnott, from a dissection made by him at the Middlesex Hospital, supposes that the yellow membrane found in the œsophagus, is not the product of inflammation, but its cuticular covering changed by the direct action of the acid. In his case, the larynx had a thin delicate layer of lymph, the result of inflammation. The patient survived 36 hours. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 12, p. 219.) Dr. Roupell gives a drawing of this case.

thin and yellow in some places, and thick and black in others, exhibit networks of dilated bloodvessels, filled with black coagulated blood. Often there are several points of the stomach dissolved, and ready to burst with the slightest touch. It contains a great quantity of gas, which has a particular smell, resembling that of bitter almonds. Most commonly, it also contains a great quantity of yellow matter, having the consistence of pap, in which there are flocculi, or small masses resembling tallow, which, however, may be the cheesy part of the milk drunk by the patient, decomposed in the stomach. Its sides are coated internally with a thick grained paste, of a yellowish green colour, composed, according to all appearance, of the internal membrane, disorganized and dissolved, and of coagulated albumen. Almost always the substance of the stomach is swelled in some places, and deeply marked with black, without being dissolved. This effect is most remarkable at the great end, into which the acid seems to fall by its weight. The rugæ of the stomach are very brown, and are reduced to mucilage. They are easily removed by the finger from the nervous coat, which, by reason of its whiteness, often appears in a great measure sound. The small end is affected with many deep spots of gangrene, and the pylorus is much contracted.

The duodenum internally, especially at its two curvatures, presents the same kind of change as the stomach. Its sides, as well as those of the jejunum, are marked with yellow, slightly greenish. They are also lined with a very thick orange crust, and the villous membrane is dissolved and destroyed. These phenomena have less intensity in proportion as the part is more distant from the stomach.

The surface of all the abdominal viscera is commonly very much inflamed. The peritoneum is thickened, hard, of a dirty red, covered with albuminous layers, which unite, by numerous adhesions, all the viscera, and especially the folds of the intestines, as it were into a single mass.

The thoracic surface of the diaphragm, and of the inferior lobes of the lungs, is covered with a very solid layer of albumen, of a whitish colour.

A bloody liquid is effused into the abdomen; and there is also a small quantity in the chest.*

The urinary bladder contains no urine, although the patients have not discharged any. The large intestines are usually filled with very hard fæces.

In most cases where the stomach is perforated, its bulk is very small; in other respects it is the same. The holes commonly occur in the large and small extremities: Their form is circular, and their edges thin and as if dissolved. We then find in the abdomen an enormous effusion of a thick yellow liquid, containing many white flocculi, and resembling the fluid with which the stomach is filled, when it is not perforated. The greatest distention always accompanies this state of the belly. The alteration and disorganization are carried to the highest degree. The surface of the abdominal viscera seems to have suffered the direct action of very dilute nitric acid. It is greasy and unctuous to the touch, and almost every where spotted with yellow.

The appearances upon dissection of those who die of the secondary effects, are entirely different from those now described. It would be difficult to find an example of greater emaciation, more advanced consumption, or disgusting form. Nothing is equal to the degree of withering, drying up and decrepitude of the whole organs. Their colour is faded; the internal cavities do not contain the usual serum; the cellular and muscular systems are almost annihilated; the bones become dry, as in persons of advanced age, and break with wonderful facility. But these changes are general and secondary, and depend upon local organic derangement of the alimentary tube. The stomach and whole intestinal canal are contracted to an extremely small size, so that they could be contained in the hollow of the hand. The intestines are not larger than the little finger, sometimes not exceeding a thick

* The blood in the heart and large vessels has been several times seen forming a firm black clot. And this, according to Dr. Christison, is not the effect of the poison, but its healthy state differing thus from what is observed from other poisons. Dr. Hertwig is said to have performed numerous experiments with the mineral acids, and also the carbonic, acetic and tartaric, on animals and birds, and the effect of all except the nitric, is to give a dark colour to the blood within the arteries and veins. *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 11, p. 501.

writing quill. Their coats are very thick, their cavity almost obliterated, and containing only a little mucosity. In general, all the parts touched by the poison are contracted, and as if obliterated. The stomach, which often resembles a portion of a small intestine, appears sound externally, and only presents some adhesions to the diaphragm, liver and spleen; internally, the most remarkable change is the contraction of the pylorus, the passage through which is not larger than a lentil, or even scarcely admits a probe; and the membranes of the stomach itself are so thickened and compacted around it, that they have lost all their natural suppleness.

On the internal surface there are irregular spots, or rather smooth and red places, which seem to be covered with a regenerated mucous membrane, less villous than that which has been destroyed by the action of the acid. These cicatrices are especially large and numerous in the great end of the stomach and around the circumference of the pylorus. There are also commonly some at the cardia, as well as in the lower half, and even the whole of the œsophagus and pharynx. The adhesions of the stomach with the neighbouring parts are sometimes simple, but most commonly they are very remarkable. Viewed from the inside of the stomach, they form irregular, circular depressions where the whole thickness of the coat is evidently wanting, so that in attempting to destroy these adhesions, we find that there are in fact so many holes through the substance of the stomach, which are plugged up by the adhesion of the neighboring viscera.

Chemical proofs. *When concentrated*, its odour is peculiar. It acts also on copper, lead or tin, disengaging nitric oxide gas, which is converted into nitrous acid gas, on coming in contact with the atmosphere. Another striking test, is morphia; this is changed, in a few seconds, to an orange colour, and soon forms a bright yellow solution.*

When diluted, the following is recommended by Dr. O'Shaughnessy. After evaporation to dryness, the residue is to be put in a small tube and heated for a second or two with a drop of sulphuric acid. A crystal of morphia is then to be

* Dr. O'Shaughnessy, *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 6, p. 330.

dropped into the mass, and moved round the edges of it, or in the moisture on the tube above. If any nitric acid be present, the morphia will take its orange colour.*

Process for stains. Boil the substance stained, in distilled water several times in succession; ascertain its acidity, and then render it feebly alkaline, by adding a few drops of a diluted solution of caustic potash. Evaporate this to dryness. The residuum must be treated with sulphuric acid, as in the former case, and brought in contact with morphia.

Process for compound mixtures, as in the contents of the stomach. Neutralize them with potash, and then filter and evaporate. Crystals of nitrate of potash will be formed, which may be decomposed by sulphuric acid. But often the quantity of acid present is not sufficient to produce this result. In this instance, Dr. O'Shaughnessy recommends a slow process of filtration through a loosely twisted cord of filtering paper, about eight inches long. The drops that pass out should be received in a proper vessel, and the whole covered with a bell-glass to prevent evaporation. In a day or two they will probably be so pure as to yield, by evaporation, crystals of nitre; which when decomposed by sulphuric acid, will allow the morphia to produce its effect. If this process be not effectual to remove all organic matters, Dr. Christison directs that acetate of silver be added to the product of evaporation. This throws down hydrochloric acid, and with it several organic principles. The residue may be filtered and evaporated, and treated as above.†

In order to discriminate between the nature of the yellow spots that are observed in the intestinal tube, and which are equally the result of nitric acid, iodine and the bile, Barruel directs that a weak solution of caustic potash be applied to them. If owing to bile, there will be no change—if to iodine, the spot immediately disappears, and the tissue returns to its natural colour—but if to nitric acid, the colour will become stronger, and of an orange yellow.‡

* Ibid. Dr. Liebig's test of the sulphate of indigo has been shown by Dr. O'Shaughnessy to be altogether fallacious. Several other acids, besides four or five salts, equally possess the power of decolorizing it. (Ibid. p. 330, 452; and also vol. 10, p. 302.)

† Christison, p. 144 to 150. Lancet, N. S. vol. 6, p. 340; vol. 7, p. 610.

‡ Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 1, p. 278. A French case of supposed poisoning by nitric acid, is given in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 34, p. 212.

Antidotes. The same substances that were recommended in noticing sulphuric acid, are proper in this case. Chalk, magnesia, or soap and water, should be immediately used. If, however any form of lime has been given as the immediate antidote, it may be well to remember, that the nitrate of lime is hardly in itself innocuous, and it is hence necessary to follow its use with draughts of broth or milk containing the phosphate of soda in solution. An insoluble phosphate of lime is thus produced.

The alkaline carbonates are not to be used, being themselves possessed of corrosive properties.*

MURIATIC (*Hydrochloric*) ACID. I believe there is no case on record, of this acid proving poisonous to man. There can, however, be no doubt of its corrosive properties.

The tests are thus given by Dr. Christison. In its concentrated state, it is known by its yellow fumes, and its peculiar odour. Bring a rod dipped in ammonia, near another dipped in the acid, and a white vapour will arise. When diluted, add nitrate of silver, and a dense white precipitate, the chloride of silver, is produced. This latter salt is distinguished from all other white salts of silver, by drying and heating it in a tube. It fuses, but, unlike the others, remains undecomposed at a red heat. Again, the other white insoluble salts of silver, which are dissolved by ammonia, are soluble in an excess of nitric acid, but the chloride, if treated in the same way, is not redissolved by an excess of nitric acid.†

There is an inherent difficulty, however, in proving poisoning with this acid by chemical tests, since it has been found as a natural or diseased product in the stomach, by several very accurate chemists.

ACETIC ACID. This substance, in its concentrated form, has been found to be a poison. An ounce of pyroligneous vinegar or acid, when given to a dog, whose œsophagus was tied, caused death in five, seven or nine hours, preceded by efforts to vomit, great suffering and weakness. An ounce of the concen-

* Christison, p. 165. *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 836.

† Christison, p. 151. *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 193.

trated acid, occasioned death in an hour and a quarter. On dissection, in all these cases, the stomach contained brownish black blood; the villous coat was blackish, and the subjacent tissue injected. Erosions and even perforations were not uncommon when the strong acid was used.*

Even common vinegar, in large quantities, was found destructive to dogs, when vomiting was prevented.

A medico-legal case is related by Orfila. A female aged 19, died in one of the streets of Paris. All the information that could be obtained concerning her, was, that she appeared as one drunk; moaned incessantly, but passed on, after asking her way. Shortly after, she was found lying in agony, and after strong convulsions, died. On dissection, the mucous membrane of the tongue and œsophagus was seen of a leathery consistence, wrinkled and brown. The stomach contained eight ounces of a fluid which effervesced. Its mucous membrane was no where destroyed, but some red or dark spots were seen near to the pylorus, and many of its small glands were hardened. Coagulated blood was found in the submucous cellular tissue.

The fluid found in the stomach was filtered, and a small quantity of carbonate of lime added to it; but no effervescence followed, although a test paper was slightly reddened. Nitrate of silver and muriate of barytes, each demonstrated the presence of the muriatic and sulphuric acids, or their salts.

The fluid was now put in a retort, with a receiver attached, and the retort immersed in a concentrated solution of muriate of lime. This last was heated to boiling, and the fluid in the retort was by this means evaporated to dryness, without any charring of the organic matter. The fluid distilled into the receiver, was now tested for sulphuric and muriatic acids; and they being absent, carbonate of potash was added to neutralization. This was then evaporated to dryness; sulphuric acid was added, and by redistilling, a notable quantity of strong and pure acetic acid was procured.†

In its pure state, acetic acid is known by its odour, and its forming, with potash, a deliquescent salt.

The antidote, according to Orfila, is magnesia.

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 6, p. 159.

† *Ibid.*

OXALIC ACID. Numerous deaths have occurred in England within a few years, from the administration of this substance. It was generally taken in an accidental manner, having been mistaken for the sulphate of magnesia, a salt which it resembles in external character. The facility of the occurrence of these accidents is increased from the circumstance, that it is frequently applied to several domestic purposes, such as the cleaning of leather, and the removal of iron-mould and ink-spots. There are not, however, wanting instances, in which this substance has been wilfully taken to destroy life.

The cases substantiating the deleterious effects of oxalic acid, are contained in the leading periodical publications of the day; and from a comparison of these, I am enabled to present the following account of its effects.*

When the solution is strong, (and this is usually the case, from its being mistaken for Epsom salts,) its corrosive nature is such as to excoriate the mouth in a violent manner. A young man purchased some for the purpose of committing suicide, but its extreme pungency made him hesitate in swallowing it while it was yet in his mouth; his life was thus preserved, but a most dreadful excoriation of the tongue, mouth and gums, was the consequence.† So also in Mr. Fraser's case, the tongue was greatly swollen, and had the appearance

* The most elaborate and valuable article on this subject, is a paper on poisoning by oxalic acid, published by Prof. Christison and Dr. Coindet, in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 19, p. 163. Its effects on animals, and the tests for its detection, are fully considered. Besides this, the following cases have been published:

1. Case by Mr. Royston, *London Medical Repository*, vol. 1, p. 332. This was the first, and it occurred in 1814.
2. By Mr. Roberts, *Ibid.* vol. 3, p. 380.
3. By Mr. George Johnson, *Ibid.* vol. 6, p. 474.
4. By Mr. Williams, *Ibid.* vol. 11, p. 20.
5. By Dr. Smith, *Ibid.* vol. 12, p. 18.
- 6, 7. Two cases in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 13, p. 249.
8. By Mr. Fraser, *Ibid.* vol. 14, p. 607.
9. Case of Michael Dillon, in *Cooper's Tracts*, p. 449, from a London paper.
10. Case by Mr. Hebb, *London Medical Repository*, vol. 22, p. 475.
11. By Mr. Mollan, *Dublin Hospital Reports*, vol. 2, p. 329.
12. A case at St. George's Hospital, *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 1, p. 447.
13. A case communicated to Dr. Christison, by Dr. Arrowsmith of Coventry.

Dr. Christison also refers to Dr. Percy's *Inaugural Dissertation*, for additional cases.

Nearly all of these (with, I believe, only two exceptions) proved fatal. There are several cases of recovery, which I shall presently mention.

† *London Medical Repository*, vol. 7, p. 526.

of being scalded. I do not, however, find any notice of this in the other cases, probably because the solution was diluted, or (which is more likely) taken down at a single swallow.

Death ensued with great rapidity, in forty minutes in one case, and in ten minutes in two others. A few hours (prolonged in Mr. Hebb's and Dr. Arrowsmith's to thirteen) is generally the term. The patient under the care of Mr. Fraser, however, survived several days, and finally died of the secondary effects. As this case is somewhat peculiar, I shall notice it particularly hereafter.

The earliest symptom, in the absence of the one mentioned above, is burning pain in the stomach; and this occurs early, if the dose be large; but if it be small, some hours may elapse. Excessive vomiting of a dark-coloured or sanguinolent fluid soon follows, and commonly continues until near death. There are, however, exceptions to this. Some have not vomited at all, and Dr. Christison observes that this is most apt to happen when the poison has been taken much diluted.

When life is prolonged for a few hours, pain in the bowels and purging follow, and the fæces are mixed with blood. In Mr. Hebb's case, there was an involuntary discharge.

Along with these there is a sunken countenance, and the pulse is almost imperceptible at the wrist, indicating the nearness of death.

In Dr. Arrowsmith's case, two peculiar symptoms occurred. One was a deep red mottled appearance of the skin in circular patches; and the other, the poisoning and death of leeches applied to the stomach. This was six hours after the poison had been taken; and although healthy, and fastening immediately, "yet they did not seem to fill; and on touching one, it felt hard, and immediately fell off, motionless and dead. The others were all in the same state; they had all bitten, and the marks were conspicuous, but they had drawn scarcely any blood."*

In the case related by Mr. Fraser, an individual took half an ounce of oxalic acid in solution, instead of salts. He instantly became conscious of the mistake, from perceiving the

* Christison, p. 198.

acid taste. Pain and vomiting ensued, and although they were mitigated in some degree by alkaline remedies, yet they recurred with violence. Spasms, impeded respiration, and general numbness were complained of; the pulse was scarcely perceptible at the wrists or temples; the extremities were cold, and the matter vomited became tinged with blood: after a short time, he brought up a large quantity of blood. Diluents were freely administered, together with anodynes, and his situation gradually became more tolerable. Numbness, however, occasionally occurred, and was relieved by warm applications and a drink of sago and wine. On the second day, vomiting, retching, spasms, and singultus supervened; the pulse was nearly 100, and feeble, and numbness and chilliness of the feet were present. A repetition of previous remedies gradually moderated these, but the hiccup continued for several days. On the sixth day, he felt himself so well as, contrary to directions, to ride out in a gig. After this, debility came on gradually; an eruption appeared over the whole body, and hiccup was occasionally present. He retained his senses until the day before his death, and complained often on swallowing any article which was not perfectly bland. He expired fourteen days after taking the poison, in a state of perfect exhaustion.

Some cases of recovery are referred to in the note below.* In all these, great irritation and pain in the stomach, and sometimes also in the throat, were constant and early symptoms; spontaneous vomiting is only mentioned in two instances, but in several, more or less of gastric irritation remained, which required laxatives to remove it.

Appearances on dissection. These indicate the presence of a powerful acid. In Mr. Royston's case, where the subject was

* Dr. Scott, of Cupar-Fife. Dose, a wine-glass of the solution, containing a drachm of the acid. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 24, p. 67.)

Prof. Syme. Two drachms in solution. (Ibid. vol. 44, p. 27.)

A case at Guy's Hospital. Half an ounce—suicide. Vomiting occurred soon, but the stomach pump was immediately used, and magnesia exhibited. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 5, p. 704.)

A case at the Worcester Infirmary, (England.) Half an ounce by mistake; cured by chalk, castor oil, &c. (Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 3, p. 152.)

Case by Dr. Tolefree, of New-York. A quarter of an ounce, by mistake. Emetics. (Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 12, p. 158.)

a female, who died in forty minutes, the villous coat of the stomach was injected with blood, and florid over its whole surface: patches of an extraordinary intensity were also noticed. In other cases this coat was entirely corroded, and indeed the stomach perforated, so that its contents had escaped into the cavity of the abdomen. The œsophagus of one individual was so injured, that its cuticular coat peeled off with the slightest effort.*

The intestines sometimes partook in the inflammation and contraction, and at other times not; but the viscera of the thorax, and the brain, do not appear to have been diseased in those cases where their examination is noticed.

In Mr. Hebb's case, the mucous membrane of the throat and gullet appeared as if it had been scalded, and could be easily separated. The stomach contained a pint of thick, dark coloured fluid, owing to the blood in it: its inner coat was pulpy, in many points black, and in others highly inflamed. The same was seen in the intestines. The lining membrane of the trachea and lungs was also very red.

In the instance reported by Mr. Fraser, on dissection, the stomach and a small portion of the intestines presented the marks of inflammation; the villous coat was completely destroyed, and this abrasion extended upwards throughout the whole of the œsophagus, exposing the muscular coat. In some parts the villous coat seemed entire, but on examination, it was found to be soft, and easily rubbed off with the finger or sponge. The muscular coat of the stomach and œsophagus was much thickened, highly injected, and exhibited a dark gangrenous appearance. No perforation of the stomach was observable.

The small intestines exhibited similar appearances, but partially, and in a lighter degree. The other viscera were healthy.

It is remarkable that there is one fatal case of a girl dying in *thirty minutes* after swallowing an ounce, in which there

* "A quantity of a dark-coloured fluid, resembling coffee-grounds, and probably consisting of extravasated blood altered by the poison, was generally found in the stomach." (Christison and Coindet.)

were no morbid appearances whatever to be seen in any part of the alimentary canal.*

Effect on animals. On this point, we have the experiments of Dr. A. T. Thomson, and those of Drs. Christison and Coindet. The former gentleman produced death in a very few minutes, by introducing from ten grains to half a drachm into the stomachs of rabbits and dogs. Convulsive movements generally preceded the fatal termination, and on dissection, the stomach was found very rotten, diaphanous and pulpy to the touch, and its bloodvessels enlarged and very black. The mucus contained in it was coagulated. The lungs were inflamed, and the blood found in the lungs, heart, abdomen, and the frothy fluid found in the bronchial cells, showed traces of an acid. The œsophagus and pharynx were healthy.†

In the experiments of Christison and Coindet, the œsophagus was tied in every instance, and the violence of the efforts to vomit was directly in proportion to the quantity of the poison. Death, however, always succeeded after a short interval. On dissection, the stomach was found filled with the dark coloured fluid already noticed, when speaking of the examinations of the human subject, and which is evidently extravasated blood acted on by the acid. The internal membrane of the stomach was always of a deep cherry-red colour, and generally streaked with lines of black, granular extravasation. The degree of corrosion induced appears to depend on the strength of the acid.

When portions of a dead stomach were submitted to the action of a saturated solution, the mucous epidermis separated, and appeared thickened and brittle. After some hours, the villous coat was also acted upon, and in two days it was brittle and easily scraped off, and the other tunics were softened, swollen, and translucent. It thus evidently exerts a powerful chemical action on the organs concerned.

These observers also noticed, that a small quantity of acid, when diluted, destroys an animal much sooner than when concentrated, and on dissection, no unnatural appearance what-

* London Medical Repository, vol. 3, p. 380.

† Ibid, p. 383.

ever could be detected in the stomach, excepting a slight cineritious tint of the mucous epidermis.

The result drawn from their numerous experiments is, that oxalic acid in most circumstances acts through the medium of absorption. They could not, however, detect its presence in any of the fluids.*

Dr. Roupell, in his experiments on dogs with this acid, has confirmed the above results.† The stomach, on dissection, had the hour-glass contraction.

Tests. Oxalic acid might be mistaken for two other vegetable acids, the tartaric and citric acids, but Drs. Christison and Coindet have shown that these can be given to animals in large quantities without any inconvenient result.‡ From a similarity in the external appearance, it has most commonly been confounded with sulphate of magnesia, and hence many fatal mistakes have happened.

(a.) Taste the suspected substance; if it be oxalic acid, it is very sour; if epsom salts, very bitter and saline.

(b.) Pour some water over the suspected crystals; if it be oxalic acid, its particles explode with a sharp, crackling sound, and disperse in every direction.

(c.) A little writing ink dropped on the crystal will become reddish brown, forming oxalate of iron. Epsom salts are not changed.§

(d.) Litmus and blue sugar loaf paper are reddened by the acid.

(e.) Ammonia, if the solution of the acid be sufficiently concentrated, will produce a radiated crystallization, as the oxalate of ammonia formed is much more soluble than the acid itself. Dr. O'Shaugnessy states that this property distinguishes it from every other acid.||

The following tests we owe to the suggestions of Drs. Christison and Coindet, and they may be used on all suspected fluids found in the stomach, or vomited.

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 163 to 186.

† Illustrations of the effects of poisons, with drawings.

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 185, 337.

§ Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 5, p. 152.

|| Dr. O'Shaugnessy, Lancet, N. S., vol. 7, p. 196.

(f.) Decolorize the fluid, if necessary, with chlorine. The hydrochlorate of lime, if the solution contains oxalic acid or oxalate of lime, will throw down an insoluble oxalate of lime. But it also precipitates with the carbonates, sulphates, phosphates, &c. This then is to be distinguished by the following experiments: The nitric acid will not take up the sulphate of lime, but a few drops of it dissolve the oxalate. The hydrochloric (muriatic) acid will not dissolve the oxalate, unless in very large quantity, while two or three drops will take up the carbonate, phosphate, tartrate, or citrate.

(g.) Decolorize as before, and add sulphate of copper. It precipitates oxalic acid, bluish-white; and the oxalates, pale-blue. The only objection to this is, that it precipitates the carbonates, and throws down the phosphoric acid, whether free or combined. The muriatic acid must be here again used as above.

(h.) Nitrate of silver gives a heavy white precipitate, with oxalic acid, and still better with the oxalates; and this precipitate, when dried and heated over a candle, becomes brown on the edge, then of a sudden fulminates faintly, and is all dispersed in white fumes. This is deemed a very delicate test, as from a quarter of a grain dissolved in 4000 parts of water, the experiments procured enough of the powder to show its fulmination twice.

These tests are very little influenced by the presence of such animal matter as may exist in the suspected fluid, after boiling and filtration. The chief animal principle then present is gelatine, and neither the hydrochlorate of lime, sulphate of copper, or nitrate of silver, precipitate it alone. They therefore, and especially the two first, will not be affected by its presence; but when it occurs in a very large proportion, it suspends the action of nitrate of silver.

As, however, magnesia and chalk are the proper antidotes for oxalic acid, it is possible their oxalates may be formed, and the proofs of the poison must be sought for, either in the solid contents of the stomach, or the solid matter vomited. In such cases, the following are the directions of Dr. Christison:

If they have been given, let the mixture remain at rest for

some time. Then pour off the supernatant fluid, which if acid, may be tested as above. Dissolve the mass that remains in pure water, to a sufficiently thin consistence; add to this, one twentieth of its weight of carbonate of potash, and boil it gently for two hours. The result of this will be an oxalate of potash in solution. Filter, then render it faintly acidulous with nitric acid, then filter again, and render it faintly alkaline with carbonate of potash. Filter a third time. The object in these repeated operations is to throw down the animal matter.

A solution of acetate of lead must now be added as long as any precipitate is formed, and this should be washed and dried. Then rub it carefully with a little water in a mortar, and transmit through it a current of sulphuretted hydrogen for four hours. Filter and boil the sulphuret of lead that has been thus produced. The oxalic acid will be set free, and is found in the solution tolerably pure.

Dr. Christison was enabled by this process to detect one grain of oxalic acid, mixed with a decoction of an ounce of beef and six ounces of water.

Oxalate of lime has recently been found by M. Henry of Paris, in the root of rhubarb. If therefore that salt should be detected, it may be necessary to inquire whether rhubarb has been recently administered.*

Antidotes. Death is generally so sudden in these cases, that but little can be done. Emetics, however, should be immediately given, but not to be aided in the usual way with warm diluents, since dilution accelerates the operation of the poison.

We owe to Dr. Thomson the recommendation of the use of a mixture of chalk and water, to be given as soon as possible. Oxalate of lime will thus be formed in the stomach.† Magnesia is adviseable, and the solution of the bicarbonate, invented by Dr. Murray of Belfast, is particularly commended, as it precipitates the acid itself, and all its soluble combinations.‡ Both of these substances, (chalk and magnesia,) have been given with striking advantage.

* Christison, p. 183, &c. *Lancet*, N. S., vol. 7, p. 196, 197.

† *London Medical Repository*, vol. 3, p. 383. A case where it proved useful is given in *Ibid.* vol. 12, p. 18.

‡ *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 10, p. 836.

The alkalis should not be given, as Christison and Coindet found death to follow in animals from the exhibition of the oxalates of potash and ammonia in a few minutes. "They do not corrode; they hardly irritate, but they produce tetanus and coma, like the diluted acid."*

Should the patient be so fortunate as to recover from the immediate effects, the proper means for removing gastric irritation are needed. Stimulants may subsequently be necessary.

PHOSPHORUS, when dissolved in oil and injected into the jugular vein, instantly produced copious exhalations of phosphorous acid. The respiration was difficult and panting, a considerable quantity of a bloody serosity was thrown up, and death followed in twenty minutes after the injection. The lungs, on dissection, exhibited several livid and dense portions; the stomach was natural, and the left ventricle of the heart contained blood as black, and fluid, as that which filled the right.

When phosphorus is introduced in small lumps into the stomach, it does not at first induce any remarkable effect, but the animal falls gradually into a state of depression and dies. The stomach is much inflamed, and contains a thick greenish fluid. In an experiment where our author administered one hundred and forty grains in small lumps to a dog, one hundred and twenty-seven only were found after death, in various parts of the intestines. The action of this substance is infinitely more violent, when it is introduced into the stomach in a state of solution with oil. Fumes of phosphorous acid were exhaled from the lungs, and the subject seemed to suffer exquisite torture. It then lay immoveable, but about six minutes before he expired, general and violent convulsions occurred. The stomach was corroded in three places, and the mucous membrane where it had not been perforated, was reduced to a stringy kind of pulp. The lungs were red, distended with blood, and did not crepitate.†

* Christison, p. 200. There is an article very common in our druggists' shops, under the name of *Parliament* or *Lemon drops*, which I apprehend are sometimes made with oxalic acid and sugar.

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 1, p. 405, &c. Dr. T. Thomson states, that if phosphorus be allowed to stand in water for some time, it will render that fluid poisonous to animals who drink it. (*Annals of Philosophy*, vol. 16, p. 232.)

Cases of its fatal effects on man are also not wanting. The following is related by Dr. Worbe.

On the 24th of April, 1824, a young man took half a grain, mixed with hot water. Finding no bad effects, he took a grain and a half in the same vehicle at a single dose. He breakfasted almost immediately, and experienced no bad symptom, until about five o'clock, when he had no sooner swallowed some food than he complained of violent pains in the stomach and abdomen. Incessant vomiting followed with diarrhœa. Remedies were resorted to with little effect. An extreme tenderness of the abdomen remained, and he gradually sunk until the twelfth day, when he died.*

M. Dieffenbach, chemist at Biel, took first one grain of phosphorus, and finally increased it to three grains. The result of this last experiment was violent pain, which in a few days was followed by vomiting a greenish matter of a garlic like smell. The irritation of the stomach could not be allayed. Convulsions and a paralysis of the left arm succeeded, and he died on the twelfth day.†

The *appearances on dissection*, in M. Worbe's case, were a yellow skin with occasional livid spots, the lungs gorged with blood, the muscular coat of the stomach inflamed, but the internal ones not, except at the two orifices, where there were slate-coloured patches. All the intestines were tympanitic. In another case, by Dr. Flachsland, the external coat of the stomach was red, and the villous one presented marks of inflammation. So also did the same coat of the duodenum, and the kidneys and spleen were inflamed.‡

Treatment. As inflammation is evidently the consequence of the exhibition of phosphorus, we should of course use the appropriate remedies for removing it. An emetic must be premised to remove, if possible, the poisonous ingredient, and water containing magnesia in a state of suspension, is also ad-

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 23, p. 223.

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 4, p. 357. Other fatal cases are given by Lobstein in his work on Phosphorus. New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 4, p. 413, and by Weickhard, quoted in Hooper's Medical Dictionary. I am aware that the experiments of Chabert have induced some to suppose that phosphorus is innocuous. I doubt, however, whether they would be willing to swallow and retain the quantities he took.

‡ Christison, p. 169.

vised, as tending to fill the stomach with fluid, and at the same time neutralizing the acid that is forming.

Phosphorous acid, according to Dr. Hunefeld, produced, in the dose of a drachm, difficult breathing, bloody vomiting, convulsions and death in twelve hours, in a rabbit. The villous coat of the stomach was brownish-red near the cardia alone. There was no smell of phosphorus, but the urine contained phosphoric acid.*

IODINE. Orfila was the first who performed any experiments with this substance. He found that dogs, if they vomited freely, survived, although they had taken a drachm and upwards of it, but when this did not occur, or if the œsophagus was tied, it invariably proved fatal, after exciting violent efforts to vomit, hiccup, thirst, quick pulse and great depression. The mucous membrane of the stomach was always found corroded and ulcerated, but the lungs and other organs were natural.

Our author was able in some cases to detect the iodine in the matter vomited and passed by stool. On drying and exposing it to heat, the violet coloured vapour appeared.

A drachm and twelve grains were sprinkled on a wound on the back of a dog. The skin immediately grew yellow, and in three days, an eschar formed, leaving the subjacent parts highly inflamed. The animal, however, recovered.

Our author next ascertained the effect of iodine on the human subject. He himself took two grains fasting, but they only excited an abominable taste, and nausea. The next morning, he took four grains. He was immediately sensible of constriction and heat in the throat, which continued a quarter of an hour, and he soon vomited yellow liquid matter, in which iodine was readily discovered. Two days after he took six grains, which instantly excited heat and constriction of the throat, nausea, irritation, salivation and pain of the stomach, and in ten minutes, copious bilious vomitings and slight colic pains, which yielded to two emollient enemata, after having continued an hour. The pulse rose from 70 to 90 and was fuller. The next day he felt only a slight fatigue.†

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 461.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 490.

Shortly after, or about this time, iodine came extensively into use for the treatment of bronchocoele. It was undoubtedly given in too large doses, and the effects, as stated by Coindet, were rapid emaciation, severe pain in the orbits and eyes, with great defect of vision; neuralgic pains in various parts of the body, palpitation of the heart, and not unfrequently inflammation of some of the organs. In females, a rapid diminution of the size of the breasts, (and this continuing permanent,) was early noticed.*

Fatal cases are not wanting. In these severe vomiting and purging were a common occurrence. Dr. Zink, a Swiss physician, relates two instances of death from its incautious use. In one there was diarrhœa, priapism, tremors of the whole body, and palpitation. The body was not opened. In the other, it was, and a violent inflammation of the stomach and intestines was found.†

In an instance where two drachms and a half of iodine were taken for the purpose of suicide, a sense of burning from the throat to the stomach was soon perceived, and nausea and acute pain followed. In an hour, vomiting of a yellowish fluid, having the taste of iodine, ensued. This was promoted by the use of warm water, while the attendant symptoms were counteracted by enemata and gum-water. Through these means, the patient recovered.‡

Tests. When in a solid state, iodine may be detected by its peculiar odour; the violet fumes it forms when heated, and the fine *blue* colour it produces with a solution of starch.

When dissolved in water or solutions of neutral salts, it communicates a yellowish or reddish-brown colour to the fluid. This is destroyed by sulphuretted hydrogen. "In the colour-

* *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 3, p. 757. Review of Brera and Coindet on Iodine. See also the Review of Gairdner's Work in *ibid.* vol. 5, p. 104.

† Anderson's *Journal*, vol. 2, p. 148. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 23, p. 225,

‡ Case by Dessaigne, *Littel's Journal of Foreign Medicine*, vol. 1, p. 569, from *Journal de Chimie Médicale*. I must not leave the notice of the effects of iodine, without mentioning that Dr. Rivers, of Tennessee, has stated two cases in which it appears to have produced barrenness. A lady who married at seventeen, suffered under goitre, but for the three first years, had a child annually. Iodine was now exhibited for the disease, which it partially diminished, and it also affected the breasts. Eight years have elapsed, and she has not been pregnant again. Other similar cases are said to have occurred. (*American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 8, p. 546.)

less fluid thus formed, if treated with a drop or two of sulphuric acid, or in the original brown fluid without sulphuric acid, a cold solution of starch produces a fine blue colour and precipitate, which, if the solution be sufficiently diluted, disappear on boiling, reappear on sudden cooling, and are removed permanently by a stream of sulphuretted hydrogen."† This, says Dr. Christison, is a very delicate and characteristic system of tests.

If mixed with organic substances, the difficulty of detection is increased, from the fact that it often undergoes important changes in the alimentary canal. It is converted, in some instances, into hydriodic acid, and in others, the mixture may be so dark, as to prevent the characteristic action of the starch.‡ Dr. Christison recommends the following process for such a mixture. Add water, if necessary, and filter. If it be but little or not at all coloured, test it with the cold solution of starch. If the blue colour appears, and this disappears on boiling, and return again on cooling, there is no doubt of the existence of iodine. But if the filtered mixture is too deep coloured to permit the action of the starch, then agitate both solid and fluid parts with a third of their volume of ether, and after the ethereal solution has risen to the surface, remove it, and test it with the solution of starch.‡

Iodine has been detected by Cantu in the sweat, urine, saliva and milk of persons who have taken it; and Benner-scheidt, a German chemist, has found it in the blood drawn from the veins. He detected it in the crassamentum, but not in the serum.§

Dr. O'Shaughnessy detected it in the urine of a dog poi-

* Christison, p. 170. Stromeyer advises that *nitric* acid be added to the suspected liquid. I may also mention the process of Baup. Having added nitric acid to the liquid, he suspends above its surface a moistened paper sprinkled with starch. The vessel containing these is then closed, and allowed to stand at rest for some hours. If iodine be present, the starch will become blue. This is said to be a very minute test, and Berzelius recommends it, inasmuch as the matters precipitated in the solution by the acid, cannot act on the starch, or produce a colour that might be mistaken for it. (Berzelius' *Chimie*, vol. 1, p. 305.)

† Dr. O'Shaughnessy, in *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 6, p. 633. Another difficulty mentioned by him, is the ready formation in the alimentary canal of a compound, consisting of iodine and albumen, totally insoluble in alcohol, and nearly so in water.

‡ Christison, p. 171.

§ North-American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 432.

soned, in forty minutes, and occasionally after that as late as the fifth day, when the animal died. He found it also in the saliva. In these experiments, it was always in the form of hydriodic acid, having been changed to this in the alimentary canal.*

Treatment. If this substance has been taken in large quantities, the first indication, of course, is to obviate its consequences by means of emetics. The subsequent effects which are commonly those of inflammation, must be combatted by the appropriate means. In smaller doses, but where unfortunately this substance appears to accumulate in the system, before it manifests its powerful results, a long and patient course of antiphlogistic and soothing treatment is often necessary.

Hydriodate of potash. This substance in large doses, according to the experiments of Devergié, acts as an irritant on animals. Two drachms in an ounce of water, killed a dog in three days with violent vomiting; and black extravasated spots and ulcers were found in the stomach. Injected into the jugular vein in the dose of four grains; it produced tetanus and death in a minute and a half.

I can only find a single case of poisoning in the human subject. A drachm and a half of the solution of hydriodate of potash were taken for the purpose of committing suicide. The symptoms were immediate distress, nausea and burning, and acute pain at the stomach. In an hour vomiting ensued, with great suffering and vertigo. By the use of warm water however, enemata and mucilages, the patient recovered.†

Tests. The importance of understanding these is greatly increased from the fact already mentioned, of the probability of the conversion of iodine into hydriodic acid in the stomach. A little of the fluid therefore, after filtration, should be mixed with the solution of starch, as above directed, and a few drops of sulphuric acid be then added. The blue tint will appear, if there be an appreciable quantity of hydriodic acid present. Acetate of lead throws down a fine yellow precipi-

* Lancet, N. S., vol. 7, p. 613.

† Medical Recorder, vol. 14, p. 371, from Archives Generales for February, 1853.

tate, the iodide of lead; muriate of platina a dark brown one, the iodide of platina, and corrosive sublimate a fine carmine red, the periodide of mercury.*

But in compound mixtures, hardly any of these will answer, and particularly not if, as is so common at present, the hydriodate be adulterated. The only one among them that Dr. O'Shaughnessy deems deserving of confidence, is the muriate of platina; and he therefore recommends in all cases, along with it, the use of the starch test. The process which he advises is as follows. Make first a trial experiment to ascertain whether any *free* iodine be present. If no blue colour is produced, boil the mixture and filter. Neutralize, if necessary, with caustic potash, and reacidulate with acetic acid. A few drops of muriate of platina may now be added, and if hydriodic acid be present, there will be either a dark red precipitate, or the fluid will be changed of a port wine colour. Agitate it now with an ounce of ether, which dissolves the iodide of platina, and separates it from the other fluids, swimming on their surface. Remove this by a suction tube, evaporate to dryness, heat the iodide of platina by a spirit lamp in a small glass tube, and the iodine will exhibit its characteristic violet vapours.†

Dr. Christison has, however, found difficulty in producing the characteristic action of the muriate of platina. The process advised by him is this. If the starch test will not act, transmit through the whole of the contents, sulphuretted hydrogen to convert any free iodine into hydriodic acid. "Drive off the excess of gas, supersaturate with a considerable excess of potash, filter and evaporate to dryness. Char the residue at a low red heat in a covered crucible, pulverize the charcoaly mass, and exhaust with water." This solution will probably act with starch and sulphuric acid; but if it does not, evaporate to dryness, and dissolve the residuum in alcohol. This solution contains hydriodate of potash, and on being evaporated to dryness, a residuum is left, on which, when dissolved in water, the starch and sulphuric acid will act.‡

* Christison. p. 176.

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 6, p. 637; vol. 7, p. 612.

‡ Christison, p. 177. It must not be forgotten, that in suspected cases, we are to look for iodine or its salts in the urine, blood, or saliva, as well as in the contents of the stomach.

I find a test* recommended on the authority of Bolard, which may probably render these processes unnecessary. It is to mix the suspected fluid with starch, sulphuric acid and fluid chlorine. If necessary, agitate this compound. In a short time, if left at rest, the starch acquires a distinct violet colour. One part of hydriodate of potash was dissolved in two of distilled water, this was largely diluted, and the other substances then added in very small quantities. In fourteen hours the starch became slightly coloured, and in 24 hours it had a marked violet hue.* Dr. Anthony T. Thomson has recently advised the use of chlorine gas instead of *fluid* chlorine, and without any sulphuric acid. His method is to mix a small quantity of the solution of starch with the fluid to be tested, and then pour on the surface of the liquid some chlorine gas. A blue film at once appears and gradually pervades the whole, if any hydriodate be present. This also proves to be a very minute test.†]

BROMINE. This substance, according to the experiments of Barthez, Butske and Dieffenbach, is an active poison. When ten or twelve grains were dissolved in water, and injected into the jugular vein of a dog, they caused immediate death, preceded by a single tetanic convulsion; and on dissection the heart was seen gorged with clotted blood. In small doses, it produced restlessness, difficult breathing, dilated pupil and sneezing. When introduced into the stomach to the amount of from 40 to 60 drops, the symptoms were similar to the last, accompanied with violent vomiting. After some hours this would abate, and then without any striking symptoms except languor, death ensued in four or five days. The villous coat of the stomach was found ulcerated. Dr. Butske in his experiments found it to act more rapidly, and death was induced in a day.

The *hydrobromate of potash*, in doses of half a drachm, did not appear to act as a poison; but two drachms, retained in the stomach by tying the gullet, occasioned death in three days, with symptoms of irritant poisoning.

* Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 7, p. 290. Reid's Chemistry, 2d edition, p. 205. Dr. Reid says that this is the best method of detecting minute portions of iodine in solution.

† London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine vol. 4, p. 467.

From the observations of Barthez, it appears probable that bromine is converted very shortly into hydrobromic acid in the stomach, resembling iodine in this respect.

The tests of bromine when pure, are its colour, its orange fumes, and its suffocating vapour. When mixed, Barthez advises that it be subjected to the action of chlorine, which will produce a fine orange colour; or if this does not answer, treat the solid matter with caustic potash, filter, and add what passes through to the former fluid, evaporate to dryness and char, and then act on the residue with distilled water. The solution contains hydrobromate of potash and is therefore turned orange red by chlorine.*

II. *The Alkalies, Alkaline Salts, and Lime.*

PURE POTASH, when externally applied, is well known to act as a powerful caustic. On injecting a solution of it into the jugular, it produces sudden death; and on dissection, the blood is found coagulated. When swallowed by an animal, it corrodes the stomach, and inflames its mucous membrane.

The *sub-carbonate of potash*, (salt of tartar) is also a poison of considerable activity. A dog to whom two drachms were administered, died in fifteen minutes, and Plenck mentions a case, where a patient in good health took an ounce, which produced violent vomiting and gastritis. Life was, however, preserved.† There are, however, fatal instances on record.

A small boy took by mistake about three ounces of a strong solution. When Mr. Dewar saw him, an hour afterwards, the tongue, gums and fauces appeared as if seared with a hot iron, while the inside of the cheeks was highly inflamed. Vomiting occurred incessantly, and remedies had no effect. He died in twelve hours. On dissection, the mucous membrane of the pharynx and œsophagus was seen totally disorganized, and blood was universally extravasated between the muscular and pulpy mucous coats. The stomach was generally inflamed, and its mucous coat destroyed in two places. Clotted blood covered these injured parts.‡

* Christison, p. 180. North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 8, p. 432.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 330.

‡ Dewar, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 30, p. 309.

The following cases will illustrate its more chronic effects.

Two females, of the age of sixteen and twelve, each took by mistake, half an ounce of sub-carbonate of potash. Violent sickness immediately ensued, but the error was not discovered until two hours and a half afterwards. The vomiting and sickness scarcely ever ceased entirely with the elder, and she also experienced pain in the epigastric region. Leeches were applied, and various curative means, but with little success. The vomiting, though occasionally checked, yet returned with violence, and she died in about two months after taking it. The other suffered under sickness for three days, and it then ceased. She appeared to grow better, but in a few weeks the sickness returned, and she was confined to her bed. Death ensued about three weeks after that of her sister.

The appearances of disease were similar in both, although most striking in the eldest. The stomach was much thickened, and the villous coat was almost wholly destroyed; what remained, was in a state of high inflammation. The pylorus in one, was much ulcerated, and in the other, contracted and gangrenous. The intestines were gangrenous, and adhered together by thin threads of coagulable lymph. The omentum in the youngest was almost totally destroyed, and the glands of the mesentery for the most part absorbed. The liver in both was of a dark green hue, in consequence of the transference of bile, and the gall-bladder was distended with it, probably from the circumstance that the biliary ducts were found almost obliterated.

Both these females had previously been in delicate health.*

The peculiar styptic and urinous taste—a severe heat in the throat—retchings—vomiting of an alkaline matter, which commonly effervesces with acids—copious alvine evacuations and pain, are among the leading symptoms produced by this substance.

* London Medical Repository, vol. 7, p. 113. Mr. Dewar mentions a case where the immediate effects were counteracted, but in four or five days, sloughs began to separate from the lining membrane of the mouth, throat and gullet. This ended in stricture, and after many alternations of apparent recovery and illness, caused death from starvation in four months. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 30, p. 310.) Dr. Christison quotes a parallel case from Sir Charles Bell, where the swallowing of soap lees was the cause.

Orfila suggests that this alkali, of all the corrosive poisons, is that which most frequently perforates the stomach. It also causes inflammation of the different coats of this viscus, and of the intestines.

Antidote. Vinegar and lemon juice are the most valuable remedies for this purpose, and their use should be aided by mucilaginous drinks.

Dr. Chereau has published two cases of poisoning with carbonate of potash, in which large quantities of sweet oil proved signally useful. It excited vomiting, and he imagines that it unites chemically with the potash in the stomach. Several pounds are however required.*

Nitrate of potash. (Nitric salt-petre.) This salt, in large doses, acts as a corrosive poison, and cases illustrative of this effect are mentioned by various writers. An individual, labouring under a fever, took by mistake an ounce and a half of nitrate of potash. In a short time, severe anguish, with a sense of internal cold, supervened, and fainting and syncope followed. He died in less than ten hours.†

A female took an ounce and a half by mistake. It excited vomiting and purging, with violent pain in the bowels. The extremities were cold, while a burning sensation was experienced in the stomach; the pulse was almost imperceptible, and she died in sixty hours after taking the salt. On dissection, the stomach was found red, and scattered over with blackish spots, and in the centre was a small hole, which perforated it. The intestinal canal was reddish.‡

In a third case, related by M. Laflize, an ounce produced similar effects, and death in three hours. The stomach was very highly inflamed, and its mucous coat detached in several places; the external coat was of a deep red, and some brown spots were observed on it.§

There are, however, some instances where patients have

* London Medical Repository, vol. 20, p. 440.

† Quoted from Comparetti. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 87.

‡ Case by Souville. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 87.

§ See Foderé, vol. 4, p. 32. Metzger, p. 335, and Belloc, p. 141, refer to several cases where nitre has proved poisonous. Another fatal instance occurred in the vicinity of this city, in the person of a gentleman aged 75. He mistook it for Glauber's salts. Death followed in half an hour.

recovered, after taking large doses. A pregnant female, by mistake took two ounces, which immediately excited vomiting, first of the contents of the stomach, and then of blood. As soon as the alarm was taken, warm water and mucilaginous drinks, (gum arabic, linseed tea, &c.) were exhibited. Burning pains at the stomach, however, supervened, the pulse sunk, and a cold clammy sweat broke out. The vomiting recurred frequently with violence. From this she was gradually relieved, but the pains in the abdomen continued for a longer time, and when convalescent, and ten days after the taking of the salt, she was seized with a nervous affection, greatly resembling chorea. Twitchings of the muscles and involuntary motions, were present to an alarming degree, and they continued for two months. They gradually left her, and she was at last happily delivered.*

Effect on animals. Five drachms and a half given to a dog caused vomiting, but on the day following he ate well and experienced no remarkable symptoms. But when the œsophagus was tied, and the salt introduced into the stomach, it excited vertigo, pain, slight convulsions, insensibility, weakness and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was inflamed, and scattered over with black spots. The lungs were natural.

When nitre in powder was applied to a wound on the back of a dog, it produced no effect. But an application of it to an incision near the femoro-tibial articulation, produced gangrene, after some days, and the animal died.†

For its chemical detection the same process must be followed as was recommended for nitric acid, omitting however the neutralization with potash.

The most proper treatment may be inferred from the nar-

* Case by Mr. Butter, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 14, p. 34. This gentleman observes, that he is not aware of any case on record where a patient has taken and recovered from so large a dose of nitre. There is, however, another in the *Memoirs of the Medical Society of London*, related by Dr. Falconer, vol. 3, p. 527. The individual, (a blacksmith,) took two ounces, and his symptoms were similar to those already detailed, except that he vomited blood to the amount of a quart. He was ill for many months afterwards, and was not dismissed cured from the hospital until nearly a year after the accident. Other cases of recovery are cited by Orfila. See also Gordon Smith, 2d edit. p. 151. *London Medical Repository*, vol. 22, p. 213.

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 84.

ratives given above. Vomiting should be induced, and the stomach pump has been successfully used in some instances, doubtless as well from its dilution of the nitre, as its discharge. The consequent effects often call for the antiphillogistic treatment.*

The action of *soda* is precisely similar to that of potash, as is also the mode of treatment necessary to counteract its effects.

AMMONIA, in its liquid state is extremely caustic and pungent. When injected into the veins, it produces a stiffness, resembling tetanus, and violent convulsions. These were soon followed by death. When introduced into the stomach, fatal effects also ensued, and the mucous membrane of the stomach was found of a red colour throughout a part of its extent, but no ulceration or perforation was present.

Cases are mentioned where fluid ammonia caused death in the human subject within the space of a few minutes.† Orfila adds a caution against its too free use, with persons who have fainted. If inspired too long, the vapour inflames the throat and lungs, and destroys the individual.‡ The phial containing it should only be passed from time to time under the nose.

Vinegar is here also the proper antidote; although from the rapid action of the alkali, means are generally required in ad-

* Whether *Alum*, (supersulphate of alumine and potash,) in large doses, is a poison, has been elaborately investigated by Orfila in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 235, vol. 3, p. 181. He is decidedly of the opinion that it is not.

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 1, p. 387.

‡ Orfila's *Directions*, p. 44. Nysten has related such an instance. A case confirming this statement is mentioned in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 14, p. 642. "A patient was recovering from a severe attack of fever; during convalescence he was without any evident cause, seized with convulsions apparently of the epileptic kind, which became more and more frequent, and ultimately were so severe as to cause great apprehension of a fatal result. In order to rouse him from the stupor succeeding one of these fits, an attendant most imprudently held aqua ammoniac to his nose, with such unwearied but destructive benevolence, that suffocation had almost resulted. As it was, dyspnoea with severe pain in the throat, immediately succeeded, and death took place forty-eight hours afterwards. In the actual condition of the patient, there was little else than death to be expected, yet there is equally little room to doubt that the fatal event was hastened by this unhappy ministration."

Baron Percy mentions the death of the son of an apothecary, from the breaking of a bottle of ammonia, notwithstanding the immediate application of remedies. (Quoted by Dr. Wood in *American Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine*, vol. 1, p. 363.

dition to this, to counteract the inflammation that frequently occurs.

Hydrochlorate of ammonia, (muriate of ammonia, sal ammoniac,) is poisonous when taken into the stomach, or applied in large quantities to wounds. It causes vomiting, convulsions, pain in the bowels, and death. Dr. Smith applied it to the cellular texture of the thigh of dogs—vomiting ensued, with great weakness, which increased until death. The mucous membrane of the stomach presented several gangrenous ulcerations, and was generally inflamed; the whole digestive canal contained a blackish fluid, and the rectum was inflamed. In another instance, the mucous membrane was found in a state of putridity.* Dr. Arnold, in his experiments with it, found convulsions, deep respiration and contracted pupils, with tetanic spasms, to precede death.†

QUICKLIME was introduced into the stomach of a small dog, to the extent of a drachm and a half in powder. It caused vomiting, and the discharge of much saliva, with some pain: he, however, recovered on the next day. Three days thereafter, three drachms were administered. Vomiting and dejection ensued, and he died in three days, without having experienced either vertigo, convulsive motions or paralysis. The mouth, fauces and œsophagus were slightly inflamed, and the mucous membrane of the stomach was inflamed throughout its whole extent; the intestines and lungs were natural.

Quicklime is thus evidently not a very powerful poison, but it may notwithstanding prove destructive to life when swallowed. A child fell with her face on a quantity of slaked lime, and a particle of it got into the windpipe. The result was inflammation of the lungs, sloughing of the trachea, and death.‡

A case of poisoning by the *oxymuriate of lime*, (bleaching liquor,) in an infant, is related. A small quantity only was given.§

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 469.

† Bulletin des Sciences Médicales, vol. 9, p. 182.

‡ London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 46, p. 552. Dr. Christison refers to another fatal case.

§ London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 46, p. 517.

Treatment. Vomiting should be excited by warm water or irritating the throat, and the nervous or inflammatory symptoms are then to be counteracted by the means already noticed.

Hydrogenated sulphuret of potash, (liver of sulphur.) This substance, which formerly was deemed an antidote of arsenic and corrosive sublimate, has been ascertained to be one of the most powerful of the corrosive poisons. A French countess swallowed by mistake some of it which was intended for the preparation of a bath, and she expired in a few minutes.*

In a case related by Dr. Chantourelle, where four drachms were taken, so rapid and abundant was the disengagement of sulphuretted hydrogen, that the patient died from asphyxia.†

In those where life was saved with difficulty, the symptoms were, burning pain in the throat and stomach; frequent vomiting, at first sulphureous, and then bloody; purging; inflammation of the stomach. The dose, in one fatal case, was three drachms.‡

When introduced into the stomach of animals, whose œsophagus had been tied, it produced violent attempts to vomit, hurried respiration, panting, tetanic convulsions, and death. The stomach was found much inflamed, and covered over with yellowish white spots; the duodenum and jejunum were inflamed; the lungs were partially gorged, and the left ventricle contained black blood. Vomiting was excited when the œsophagus was not tied.

When injected in solution into the jugular, it produced immediate tetanus, from which, in one instance, the animal

* Orfila's Directions, p. 68. Probably this is the same case which is quoted from Dr. Montgarny's *Essai de Toxicologie*, in the London Medical Repository, vol. 10, p. 511. "A lady suffering from pyrosis, died in a few minutes after having swallowed a few mouthfuls of an aqueous solution of the sulphuret of potash. The fatal event was preceded by faintness, convulsions, and the issue of a yellowish froth from the mouth. On dissection, the stomach was found very much contracted; its internal membrane lined with sulphur, and of a brightish red colour; and its capillary system, in some points, minutely injected. The duodenum was red and inflamed, particularly towards its duodenal extremity. The superior portion of the small intestine, in about a fourth of its extent, presented the same appearances. The membrane of the mouth, pharynx and bronchiæ was whitish and coloured, but displayed no change of structure. The lungs were soft, not crepitous, and gorged with black, livid and very fluid blood."

† Alcock on the Chlorurets, p. 115.

‡ Christison, p. 222.

quickly recovered, and in another he perished. The blood in the heart was fluid, and in the left ventricle, of a deep red.

The deduction drawn by Orfila from his experiments with this substance, is, that the corrosion excited by it is slighter in proportion as the dose is stronger, and the nervous phenomena will then be much more severe.

Liver of sulphur is decomposed by the acids, and sulphuretted hydrogen is given out. Corrosive sublimate, acetate of lead, nitrate of bismuth, and the salts of copper, all yield a black precipitate on the addition of a few drops of this substance; tartar emetic, an orange yellow one; and arsenious acid, applied to a small quantity, a white precipitate — to a large quantity, a yellow one.

Antidote. Vinegar was formerly recommended, but Dr. Chantourelle has found most benefit from the administration of chloride of sodium (common salt) in frequent doses. This decomposes the sulphuretted hydrogen, "whose rapid disengagement would seem to be the cause of death in the quickly fatal cases."

Sulphuret of soda, in the dose of half an ounce, produced gastritis, which was successfully combatted by the usual means. In larger quantities, it would probably prove fatal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IRRITANT POISONS, (*continued.*)

3. METALLIC COMPOUNDS. ARSENIC. *White oxide of arsenic.* Modes in which it may prove poisonous. Internally. (*a.*) Its exhibition by the mouth—symptoms—classification of these; when the patient dies between twenty-four hours and two or three days; when he dies in a few hours; when life is prolonged some days, or he survives. How small a quantity will induce death. (*b.*) By injection into the vagina or rectum. Externally. (*a.*) Applied to a wound or ulcer, or to the skin. (*b.*) By inhaling its vapours. Appearances on dissection—in the second variety of symptoms—in the first variety. Whether poisoning by arsenic delays or accelerates the progress of putrefaction. Cases. Effects on animals. Introduction of arsenic after death. Chemical proofs—specific gravity—solubility—taste—effects of heat. Tests of arsenic, in the solid state; in solution; when mixed with organic fluids and solids, and with the contents and tissues of the stomach. Medico-legal cases. Discovery of arsenic many years after death. How far the symptoms only are a proof of the administration of arsenic. Antidotes and mode of treatment. Medical police. *Black oxide of arsenic*, or fly powder—poisonous effects. *Arsenites*. *Arsenic acid*. *Arseniates*. *Sulphurets of arsenic*—effects—medico-legal cases—tests. *Arseniuretted hydrogen*. MERCURY. *Corrosive sublimate*. Effects. Internally, (*a.*) by the mouth—symptoms; (*b.*) by injection. Externally. Applied to a wound or ulcer, or to the skin. Appearances on dissection. Effect on animals. Tests, in the solid state—fluid state—organic mixtures; the changes that it undergoes in the stomach. Medico-legal cases. Whether ptyalism is capable of a complete remission. Antidotes. *Red precipitate* and *red oxide of mercury*. *Nitrate*—cases. *Mercurial vapours*, and mercury in a state of minute division—cases. ANTIMONY. *Tartar emetic*. Symptoms—appearances on dissection—effect on animals—tests—antidotes. *Oxide*. *Muriate*. *Antimonial wine*. COPPER. *Metallic copper*—its ready oxidation. *Oxide* and *carbonate*. *Verdigris*. *Sulphate*. Symptoms—appearances on dissection—effect on animals—tests—antidotes. ZINC. *Sulphate*. Symptoms—appearances on dissection—tests. Whether metallic zinc is a proper article for domestic utensils. TIN. *Hydrochlorate*—effects—tests—antidotes. SILVER. *Nitrate*—effects—tests—antidote. *Fulminating silver*. GOLD. *Nitro-muriate*—tests. *Fulminating gold*. PLATINA. *Nitro-muriate*. BISMUTH. *Nitrate*—effects—tests—antidotes. IRON. *Sulphate*. *Muriate*. LEAD. *Acetate*—symptoms—effects on animals—doubts as to its poisonous qualities. *Carbonate*—symptoms—cases. *Litharge* and *red lead*—effects. *Muriate*. Action of air and water on lead; articles of food or drink contaminated with lead; earthen vessels glazed with lead; action of vinegar, apples, milk on them. Adulteration of wines, cider, rum, cheese, sugar. *Saturnine emanations*—symptoms. Chemical proofs of the presence of lead. Antidotes. CHROME. *Chromate of potash*—symptoms—appearances on dissection—antidote. MOLYBDENUM. TUNGSTEN. TELLURIUM. TITANIUM. OSMIUM. IRIIDIUM. RHODIUM. PALLADIUM. NICKEL. COBALT. URANIUM. CERIUM. MANGANESE. CADMIUM. BARYTES, and its salts—effects—tests—antidotes.

IN the present chapter, the poisonous metallic compounds will be considered; and of these, the first and most important is

ARSENIC.

WHITE OXIDE OF ARSENIC. This substance, commonly known under the name of *arsenic*, is, according to chemical nomenclature, *arsenious acid*, or the *white oxide of arsenic*; and it has received these apparently incompatible names, from the fact that though more analogous to the oxides, yet it possesses some of the properties of an acid. It is usually obtained by roasting cobalt ores, which contain a notable proportion of arsenic. The vapours arising during the process of making zaffre, are condensed in a large chamber, and potash is added to them; the mixture is then sublimed, and the white oxide is obtained, leaving potash with sulphur. This employment is a dangerous, and in a short time, fatal one; and accordingly, convicts whose punishment would otherwise be death, are condemned to it.*

The principal chemical characters of this substance will be noticed under the head of *chemical proofs*.

Arsenic may be poisonous, whether internally or externally exhibited. 1. *Internally*, by the mouth passing into the stomach, or by being injected into the vagina or rectum. 2. *Externally*, by being applied to a wound or ulcer, or by inhaling its vapours.

INTERNALLY, (a.) Its exhibition by the mouth.

In the previous edition, I adopted a classification of the effects of this poison, as proposed by Hahnemann. He divides them into three degrees: When death follows the exhibition of the poison within twenty-four hours, it constitutes the first degree; and when later than twenty-four hours, the second; and when the case, though attended with dangerous symptoms, does not terminate fatally, it belongs to the third class.†

This arrangement, though very useful in increasing our knowledge of the complicated symptoms arising from the taking of arsenic, must, at the present period, give place to one more consonant with the advancing state of information.

* Gordon's Inaugural Dissertation, p. 4. See a notice of this production in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 11, p. 134. The dangerous nature of the vapours arising from the roasting of cobalt ores, appears to have been early known. They were considered so hurtful to the miners, that a prayer was formerly offered up in the German church, that God would preserve miners from cobalt and spirits. — (Beckmann, vol. 2, p. 263.)

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 86.

I shall accordingly follow that which was proposed in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal some years since, and which is used by the author in his subsequent work.* The cases are divided into three classes: 1. When the person dies between twenty-four hours and two or three days; 2. When he expires in five, six or ten hours, or at farthest within the first day; 3. Where life is prolonged six, eight or ten days, or is saved altogether, but after some illness.†

1. The first case, or *where death ensues betwixt twenty-four hours and two or three days*, is the most common of all. The earliest symptom is sickness or faintness, and this often occurs within a few minutes after the poison is swallowed. But in a majority of instances, it does not happen for half an hour.‡ Pain in the region of the stomach succeeds, and this, most commonly, is of a burning kind, and much aggravated by pressure. Violent fits of vomiting and retching come on, with a dryness, heat, and tightness in the throat, creating an incessant desire for drink. Hoarseness and difficulty of speech are commonly combined with these. The matter vomited is greenish or yellowish, but sometimes it is streaked or mixed with blood, particularly if the case be protracted beyond a day.

It must, however, be understood, that the affection of the throat, as above described, is not always present, while again, it is sometimes so severe as to be attended with fits of suffocation and convulsive vomiting at the sight of fluids.

Diarrhœa generally, but not always, follows, or in its place are ineffectual attempts, and the abdomen is tense and tender, and sometimes also swollen. When the diarrhœa is severe,

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 21, p. 424. Christison, p. 270.

† Dr. Christison has arranged the numerous cases on record, according to this division, and selected their symptoms as given in the text. I will only add brief notices of American and recent European cases, for the purposes of confirmation or exception. My main aim in preparing the present article on arsenic, is to condense and simplify the subject. The discussions on it have been so voluminous, that there is not only danger of confusing it to the learner, but from the discrepancies of opinion, the lawyer may urge, as I have known to be done, that there is nothing settled on it. We shall, however, find that this, in all the leading and important points, is not the case.

‡ Several cases are quoted by Dr. Christison, in which the intervention of sleep appears to have delayed the appearance of this symptom for two, three, or even five hours.

the rectum is commonly excoriated.* Burning heat is felt at the part, and this pain will extend along the whole course of the alimentary canal. Even the mouth and lips are inflamed, and present dark specks or blisters. The lungs are also affected in these instances. Shortness of breath, tightness across the chest, and in a few cases, actual inflammation, have been the result.

There is a frequent painful and difficult micturition, and the genital organs in both sexes are painful and swollen. In one case, there was a suppression of urine for several days.

When the symptoms of irritation in the alimentary canal have subsided for some hours, convulsive motions often occur; such as tremors and twitches of the trunk, or the whole body; cramps of the legs and arms are also common. The pulse is feeble and rapid; the skin cold; clammy sweats break out, and the feet and hands are livid. The countenance betrays great anxiety; the eyes are red and sparkling; the tongue and mouth parched, and sometimes little white ulcers break out on the velum and palate.

Delirium sometimes accompanies the advanced stage, and stupor also is not unfrequent. Death, in general, comes on calmly, but is sometimes preceded by a paroxysm of convulsions.

In most cases, the above symptoms are more or less uniformly observed, but there are some peculiarities and varieties, which must also be stated.

Eruptions, either petechial or miliary, are not unfrequent in those who survive several days, but they are more generally seen in chronic cases. Swelling of the body, but particularly around the eyes, has also been noticed. Pain and

* Occasionally, bloody purging is also observed. Dr. Mercwether, of Kentucky, gives an instance, where a female, aged 64, took about forty-five grains of arsenic in biscuit. The early symptoms do not differ from those described in the text. There was however, obstinate constipation with bloody discharges of acrid mucus from the mouth and nose, probably from the violence of the vomiting. Œdema, with purple blotches on various parts of the body, succeeded, and the patient laboured under intense suffering until the ninth day, when immense discharges of blood from the intestines and delirium preceded the fatal termination. The son of this female partook of the meal, and probably took double the quantity of poison. He was seized with vomiting and purging and the usual symptoms, and gradually recovered. In both instances, soreness and swelling of the eyelids were present. (*Transylvania Journal*, vol. 2, p. 233.)

vomiting are sometimes wanting, and even on pressure, the former has not been recognized. Again, the pulse has occasionally been found very slow, not more than forty beats in a minute.

If death be somewhat retarded, there is not unfrequently a remission of all the distressing symptoms, and the patient is then in a dozing stupor. This usually happens about the second day, but it is merely temporary, and the symptoms return speedily with equal or increased violence.

It must be remembered that many cases are on record, where this train of symptoms is followed by death in a few hours, from three to six, and yet the indications of irritation of the alimentary canal have been perfectly well marked during life, and verified by dissection after death.

2. The second variety of poisoning includes those cases in which death ensues in five or six hours, or a little more, at a period too early for inflammation to be always properly developed, and accordingly the symptoms are by no means so striking as in the first variety. On animals, the effects were almost narcotic, as we shall see when noticing the experiments of Mr. Brodie, but in man, they are far from being so distinctly marked.

In some instances of this kind, vomiting occurs at the usual period after taking the poison, but it seldom continues. The most uniform effect is extreme fainting, amounting at times to deliquium. Occasionally there is some stupor, or rather oppression, and often slight convulsions. The pain at the pit of the stomach is slight, and seldom accompanied with the other signs of internal inflammation.

This variety of poisoning has been only observed under the three following circumstances: When the dose of the poison was large; when it was in little masses; or when it was in a state of solution.

Dr. Christison quotes nine cases of this variety, and they sufficiently prove that arsenic does not always, in fatal cases, produce violent and well marked symptoms.*

* Among these are the following:

New-York Medical and Philosophical Journal, vol. 3, p. 6. By Dr. J. Augustine Smith. This was a case of suicide. The individual swallowed an ounce at once

3. *The third variety is when life is prolonged six, eight or ten days, or even is saved, after some illness.* Here the early symptoms are the same as those of the first or inflammatory variety, but the subsequent ones are referable to nervous irritation. They generally come on when the former begin to recede, yet they sometimes make their appearance while the symptoms of inflammation are still violent. They vary in different individuals from coma, to an imperfect palsy of the arms and legs, and between these extremes, are observed epileptic fits or tetanus. Thus in Dr. Roget's case, after recovering from the ordinary effects, the patient was seized with epileptic fits on the sixth day, and they returned occasionally until the nineteenth.† In Mr. Turner's family, supposed to be poisoned by Eliza Fenning, twitches, numbness, and epileptic fits occurred in different individuals. Pyl mentions a case, where tetanus was present, and partial palsy of the extremities has been noticed by DeHaen, Mr. Murray of Alford, Professor Bernt, Dr. Falconer, and others.‡

Among the occasional results when life is saved, are irritability of the stomach, attended with constant vomiting of food—loss of the hair and desquamation of the cuticle.

and vomited once or twice, and complained of some heat and pain in his stomach and bowels, but "his sufferings were inconsiderable." He died in *eighteen* hours, and the stomach was very slightly inflamed.

Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 298. By Dr. Christison. Death in five hours.

Orfila's Toxicologíe, 3rd edit. vol. 1, p. 384. By Dr. Laborde. A female swallowed arsenic in lumps. She did not appear to suffer any pain; vomited when drink was given to her, but without uneasiness, and in five hours after taking it became drowsy, and then remained calm for four hours, when she expired with agony. On dissection, a clot of blood was found in the stomach.

Ibid. vol. 1, p. 387. Case communicated to Orfila by Dr. Missa. The individual took three drachms of arsenic at 8, A. M. and then went about among his friends for two hours telling them what he had done, and bidding them adieu. He was then prevailed upon to take emetics, which operated freely. At one o'clock he was seized with pain and burning in the stomach, feeble pulse, cold sweats, and died in four hours after. See also Morgagni's case, quoted at page 245 of this volume.

I may add to these Dr. Gould's case, (Boston Medical Magazine, vol. 1, p. 273.) fatal in 17 hours from taking half an ounce on an empty stomach. The only peculiarity here, was, that watery discharges, and nearly involuntary, were constantly occurring. He shrunk when pressure was made on the abdomen, but made no complaint, and gave no other indications of suffering. He died quietly and without convulsions.

† Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 134.

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 18, p. 167. Memoirs of the Medical Society of London, vol. 2, p. 224. Bedingfield's Compendium, p. 115. Dr. Dunnel, New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 9, p. 114.

Soreness and inflammation of the eyes are frequently mentioned as occurring.*

How small a quantity of arsenic will cause death? In the previous edition, I mentioned that *two grains* were deemed sufficient. This was stated on the authority of Hahnemann. Dr. Christison remarks, that the smallest actually fatal dose that he has found recorded, is $4\frac{1}{2}$ grains. The subject was a child four years old, and death occurred in six hours. Renault, however, destroyed a large dog by a single grain in solution, in four hours, while the same quantity, dissolved in wine, produced severe effects in several persons, although it was taken after dinner.† These circumstances are a sufficient warrant for allowing the above statement to remain.

(b.) *By injection into the vagina or rectum.* This is fatal in the same way as already described, but the inflammation affects the intestines more than the stomach.

A female in 1799, in the Department de l'Ourthe, in France, aged forty, died after a short illness, which was accompanied by a considerable tumefaction of the genitals, by uterine hæmorrhages, vomiting, and abundant purgation. This woman confided to two of her neighbors, that her illness was occasioned by powdered arsenic, which her husband, *in concubito*, had himself insinuated into the parts. The body was examined by the proper officers. They declared that they found the vulva and vagina in a state of gangrene—the abdomen much distended with air, and the intestines inflamed and gangrenous. The culprit was arrested, convicted, and executed.‡

Another case happened in Finland in 1786, and is related by Dr. Mangor of Copenhagen. Here arsenic was mixed

* Dr. Ramsay of South Carolina saw twelve cases in one family, who were all poisoned from putting arsenic into soup. They were seized *immediately* after eating it. Vomiting occurred in all. The bowels were affected in some, while in others they were torpid. In one person, a female aged fifty, painful micturition, black and offensive stools, and pain about the rectum were present, and during the night, there was a free menstrual discharge, although that evacuation had ceased five years previous. None of them died. Swelling of the face, eyelids, and joints of the fingers, were secondary symptoms in several of the children. (American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 15, p. 259.) See also Dr. Elliotson's Lectures, London Med. Gaz. vol. 10, p. 6.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 67.

‡ London Medical Repository, vol. 9, p. 246.

with flour, and introduced up the vagina. Three wives in succession were poisoned in this manner. With the third, the crime was perpetrated at 7 A. M., and at 3 P. M. she was seized with shivering and coldness of the body, and at the same time a burning heat of the vagina. Her sufferings were intense; she became delirious at 11 P. M., and died at midnight. The only means used for recovery was the repeated injection of milk. On dissection, the labia were found tumid and red, the vagina gaping and flaccid, and although this part had been repeatedly washed by the injections, yet grains of arsenic were found adhering to it. The os uteri was gangrenous, the duodenum inflamed, the stomach natural and the lungs quite livid. The other parts were all healthy. The blood was fluid throughout the body.*

As to the effect of injecting arsenic into the rectum, a case is cited at page 268 of this volume.

In one experiment on a dog, forty-eight grains of arsenious acid, in the form of powder and fragments, were introduced into the rectum. He shortly after passed the whole of it by stool. Two days after, the same quantity, but pulverized, was introduced. This produced loss of appetite and dejection, and he died in eight days. The parts round the anus were excoriated, and the integuments detached, so that there was an ulcer of some extent. The mucous membrane of the intestines near the anus, was of a greenish grey, and above it of a bright red, for the space of six or seven inches—but in ascending upwards, it gradually diminished in intensity.†

EXTERNALLY, (a) *Applied to a wound or ulcer, or even to the skin.*

Of this, there are some instructive cases on record. Dr. Desgranges relates the following: A chambermaid had been

* Gordon's Dissertation. Davis' Obstetric Medicine, p. 132. Christison, p. 292.

It is also mentioned, that the Copenhagen College of Medicine, when this case was referred to them, and when some doubted the possibility of this mode of poisoning, made some experiments by introducing arsenic into the vagina of mares. It produced inflammation, tumefaction, and death. On dissection, the genital parts were found gangrenous, and there was an effusion of bloody serum in the abdomen, with traces of inflammation in the stomach, intestines, lungs, aorta, thoracic duct, &c. (London Medical Repository, vol. 9, p. 246, from the *Journal de Médecine*.)

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 541.

so imprudent as to rub her head with an ointment containing a portion of arsenic, for the purpose of destroying vermin. Her head was perfectly sound, without the least scratch. But in six or seven days after, it began to swell; the ears, which were twice their natural size, became covered with scabs, as were also several parts of the head; all the glands of the jaw and neck rapidly enlarged; the face was tumefied, and almost erysipelatous. Her pulse was hard, tense and febrile; the tongue parched and the skin dry. To these were added excruciating pain and a sensation of great heat. Vertigo, fainting, cardialgia, occasional vomiting, thirst, ardor urinæ, constipation, trembling of the limbs, and delirium were also present. Dr. Desgranges treated the complaint as an inflammatory disease, and in a day or two after, the body, and especially the hands and feet, were covered with a considerable eruption of small pimples, with white heads like millet. This eruption in time dried up and desquamated, and she finally recovered, but during her convalescence the hair fell off.*

Belloc has recorded a similar instance. A female aged fifty-six, in good health, but of a delicate constitution, had the imprudence to wash her body with a solution of arsenic in water, to cure the itch. Her body swelled prodigiously, and she was covered with an erysipelatous eruption. She dragged out a painful existence for two years, but during life, was always afflicted with a trembling of the limbs.†

Roux amputated the schirrous breast of a girl of eighteen. The wound did well, but while rapidly closing, an ulceration, accompanied with slight darting pains, made its appearance in the centre. He applied the *arsenical paste*, as it is called in France, and of which arsenious acid is the basis. The day after she was seized with violent colic, and experienced some vomiting. Two days afterwards she died in violent convulsions. The body, which was covered with large ecchymoses, quickly putrefied, and on opening it, the internal surface of the stomach, and a great part of the intestinal canal, were found in a state of inflammation, and sprinkled over with black spots.‡

* Foderé, vol. 4, p. 123.

† Belloc, p. 121.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 124.

There are, however, exceptions to these in-
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Dr. Hosack also relates an instance, in which a palsy of the muscles of the neck and right arm was occasioned by its application to an encysted tumour.*

There can be no doubt, that the various quack preparations used both in England, France, and this country, for the cure of cancer, and which have arsenic for their base, have in many cases proved destructive to the patients. Certainly governments ought to interdict their application, except in the hands of regular practitioners.†

During the period of the plague of London, amulets of arsenic were worn suspended over the region of the heart, as a preservative against infection. Even this proved dangerous, and Dr. Mead severely reprehends it.

(b) *By inhaling its vapours.*

I have already adverted to the effects produced on the miners in Germany, and will now mention those caused in the copper smelting works of Cornwall and Wales, in consequence of that metal in its crude state being mixed with arsenic. Dr. Paris states, that in their vicinity, "horses and cows commonly loose their hoofs, and the latter are often seen in the neighbouring pastures crawling on their knees, and not unfrequently suffering from a cancerous affection in their rumps,

jurious and fatal effects. In some instances, no bad consequences are produced, and the result of the application of arsenic is merely the formation of an eschar. For this difference, two causes have been assigned. One is the relative quantity employed, a small portion being most readily absorbed, and producing constitutional disease, while a large quantity quickly destroys the organization of parts, and prevents absorption. Another has been pointed out by Harles. He observes that arsenic "may be applied with safety to the abraded skin, to common ulcers, to wounded surfaces, and to malignant glandular ulcers, even when highly irritable, provided the part be not recently wounded so as to pour out blood." Here the poison is applied to an open mouthed vessel, and the effect, as we shall see when stating the result of experiments on animals, is rapid and destructive. (Christison, p. 290.)

* American Medical and Philosophical Register, vol. 3, p. 339. Another fatal case from its application to a tumour, at the angle of the jaw, is given by Dr. Hoit, New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 3, p. 375.

† In France, the *pate arsenicale* is used. It consists of cinnabar 70 parts, sanguis draconis 22, and arsenious acid 8, made into paste at the time of applying it. In England, *Plunkett's ointment*, made of arsenious acid, sulphur, and the powdered leaves of the *ranunculus flammula* and *cotula fetida*; and *Davidson's remedy for cancer*—arsenious acid and powdered hemlock. (Paris' Pharmacologia, p. 209.) In the United States, *Davidson's cancer plaster*—some preparation of arsenic. As far back as the time of Haller, cases are related of death ensuing from the external application of arsenic to cancers and ill-conditioned ulcers. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 14, p. 643.) A fatal case is mentioned in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 11, p. 459.

whilst the milch cows, in addition to these miseries, are soon deprived of their milk. The men employed in these works are more healthy than we could *a priori* have supposed possible; but the antidote on which they rely with confidence, whenever they are infected with more than an ordinary portion of arsenical vapour, is *sweet oil*, and an annual sum is allowed by the proprietors, in order that it may be constantly supplied."

It deserves notice, he adds, that the smelters are occasionally affected with a cancerous disease in the scrotum, similar to that which infests chimney sweepers.*

The effects of the vapours of arsenic in the laboratory are no less marked. "Whilst Tachenius (says Van Swieten) endeavoured to fix the arsenic by repeated sublimations, the vessels being open, he inspired a very sweet air, but in a half hour felt the consequence of his imprudence. He not only breathed with difficulty, but suffered convulsions in all the members of his body, and passed bloody urine with great pain."† Dr. Gordon mentions the following as occurring to himself. Whilst subliming arsenic, the vessel broke from the heat, and on removing it hastily from the fire, he inhaled a small quantity. A sense of pain and tightness about the præcordia was immediately felt, with a difficulty of breathing and violent cough. The pulse was not changed, but weaker and quicker than natural. On the next day, all the symptoms were gone except the cough, nausea and anorexy. These were removed by a cathartic.‡

Appearances on dissection. These are generally found to vary with the length of time that the patient survives. If death ensues within a few hours, no opportunity is allowed for the developement of local inflammation, and its marks are accordingly absent.

In this then, the *second variety*, described under the head of symptoms, the most marked character is the absence of diseased appearances. In the cases there quoted, hardly any thing beyond a slight local redness of the villous coat of the stomach was noticed. In Dr. Smith's case, there was merely

* Paris' Pharmacologia, p. 209.

† Gordon, p. 15.

‡ Ibid. p. 16.

redness at the pyloric end. In Dr. Gould's nothing was seen, but two or three red patches near the cardiac extremity. Particles of arsenic were, notwithstanding, picked from the mucous coat.

It must, however, be distinctly understood, that although this absence of morbid appearances is most common in those who die within a few hours, yet there are many instances of that description in which the marks of inflammation are distinctly developed, and this will generally be indicated by the violence of the symptoms during life.

In a case related by Mr. Hebb, where death ensued in four hours, the internal coat of the stomach was much attenuated, and exceedingly vascular, while underneath it was a number of specks of extravasated blood. The peritoneal coat also was inflamed.*

The appearances observed in the *first variety*, or where life is prolonged till the second day or later, are as follows.

Redness of the throat and œsophagus. This has been found in animals, and in a few cases in man. In one instance, the tongue was inflamed and thickened.

The inner coat of the stomach is very commonly inflamed, its peritoneal one but seldom. Corrugation of the stomach is a common appearance. In several instances, the villous coat has been found black from effusion of altered blood into its texture. "When the colour is brownish black or grayish black, and not merely reddish black, when the inner membrane is elevated into firm knots or ridges by the effusion, and the black spots are surrounded by vascularity or other signs of reaction, these appearances strongly indicate violent irritation."† They are probably not imitated by any pseudo-morbid phenomenon. The villous coat is also often unusually soft, brittle, and easily separable by the nail; but this is not by any means constant. It has been seen thickened, raised, and corrugated, owing in several instances to the effusion of blood under it.

Erosion, or perforation of the coats of the stomach, is only an occasional occurrence. It is hardly to be looked for, ac-

* Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 1, p. 334.

† Christison, p. 302.

according to Dr. Christison, unless the patient survives nearly two days. The change that is designated by these terms, is, strictly speaking, either an ulceration, in which the little cavities have an irregular shape, and are surrounded by a red areola and a margin of firm tissue, or an actual gelatinizing or softening.

It is highly probable, that observers must have been mistaken in supposing that sloughing or gangrene of the coats of the stomach is ever a consequence of this poison. The black extravasated patches on the villous coat resemble it in every thing but the fœtor. According to Mr. Brodie, a preparation in John Hunter's museum, designed to show a slough of the villous coat caused by arsenic, proves to be nothing else than an adhering clot.*

The mucous secretion of the stomach is almost always greatly increased in quantity. It is either thin and glairy, or solid, as if coagulated, and in the latter case it presents itself under the varieties of a uniform attached pedicle, or of loose shreds floating among the contents. Sometimes the matter effused is true coagulable lymph. Blood, or a bloody fluid, is not an uncommon appearance.

In many instances, solid arsenic has been found adhering to the coats of the stomach, either in loose particles, or enveloped in coagulated mucus, or in little clots of blood, or wrapped up in the more solid parts of the contents, and this too, in spite of long continued and violent vomiting.† In four cases, that have come under the notice of Dr. Christison, the arsenic had a brilliant yellowness on its surface, owing to its conversion in the stomach into the sulphuret. For our knowledge of this curious fact, we are altogether indebted to that

* Christison, p. 305.

† The following remarkable case is cited by Dr. Horner, (Pathological Anatomy, p. 297,) from Laennec.

"A girl, in a moment of violent grief, swallowed an ounce of arsenic, but escaped very unexpectedly from its effects. The following year, being in a similar state of mind, she took it again and died. On dissection, the effects of the recent dose on the stomach were very obvious, and besides these, a cyst was found, which seemed just detached from the vicinity of the pylorus, where the traces of its adhesion were still perceptible. This cyst contained an ounce of arsenic, crystallized, and had the consistence of a false membrane. It was supposed to have been formed around the arsenic by the sudden inflammation which followed the first dose, and that the patient owed her preservation to its enveloping the poison."

gentleman. In all, the oxide, as well as the sulphuret, was present. The presence of sulphuretted hydrogen in the stomach is doubtless the cause of this conversion.*

In the intestines, redness of their coats is not uncommon, but ulceration is only a rare occurrence. The duodenum has sometimes been found affected in a similar manner to the stomach, with its inner coat dark red, pulpy and thickened, and portions of it wanting. Beyond the duodenum, there are seldom any distinct marks of inflammation observed until we reach the rectum.† Drs. Baillie and Male have each seen it inflamed, excoriated and ulcerated.

Redness of the pleura, and even inflammation of the lungs, are not uncommon consequences of the taking of arsenic. Instances are given by Pyl and Henke, in which the lungs were in the highest state of congestion and inflammation, so that when cut into, nothing but clotted blood could be seen in their cellular structure.

In a case examined by Orfila at Paris, and where death ensued in 48 hours from eating poisoned sausages, the left cavities of the heart were of a mottled red hue, and in the ventricle, especially on its columnæ, were many small crimson specks which penetrated into the muscular part. The right cavities had a deep reddish black tint, and the ventricle of that side contained specks like those in the other, but more faint. Orfila adds, that he had previously noticed the same appearances in animals.‡

The external organs of generation, in both sexes, have been found distended and black; and in one case, occurring to Bachmann, those parts in a female were surrounded by gangrene.§

The blood, according to Mr. Brodie, is commonly fluid in

* Christison, p. 307.

† The colon has, however, been found remarkably contracted in several instances. See Houlston, *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 14, p. 712. Dr. Booth, *ibid*, p. 62.

‡ *London Medical Repository*, vol. 20, p. 349. Mr. Cooke observed an appearance of deep redness, almost as if extravasation had taken place, beneath the internal lining of the right ventricle, in an individual who survived five hours after taking arsenic, and who, during that time, suffered much from pain and vomiting. The inner surface of the aorta, for about an inch from its commencement, was not only of a deep red colour, but spots of lymph adhered to it. (*Cooke's Morgagni*, vol. 2, p. 587.)

§ The kidneys are sometimes highly vascular, and the bladder contracted and empty.

animals killed by arsenic, and this is confirmed by other observers. Harles, on the authority of Wepfer, Sproegel and Jaeger, says it is black, semi-gelatinous, and sometimes pul-taceous. It has, however, been found coagulated in animals dead from this poison, by Dr. Campbell and others. On the human subject, the observations are very few and very discordant. Thus, of three cases where it was noticed, in one it was black and coagulated; in another, black and fluid; and in the third, florid and fluid.

The exterior appearance of the body varies with the length of the illness: If protracted, we may expect earlier and more extensive lividity, and there are also some cases where œdema is distinctly manifested.

It is a curious problem, *whether arsenic delays or accelerates the progress of putrefaction*, in bodies poisoned with it. Formerly it was the universal opinion that the process proceeded more rapidly in consequence of this. At the present day, however, its known antiseptic qualities when applied to animal substances, and the investigation of some remarkable medico-legal cases, have induced a different belief. Dr. Christison has made the English public acquainted with these. They occurred in Germany, and were previously only published in the language of that country.

The first occasion on which this property of arsenic was brought into public notice, was about the beginning of the present century, in the course of the trial of the Widow Ursinus. Previous to this, Dr. Welper, then medical inspector at Berlin, having remarked that the body of a person poisoned with arsenic remained quite fresh for a whole week in summer, attended carefully to this subject at every opportunity, and invariably, he says, found that the body resisted putrefaction. In 1803, he was engaged in investigating the case of the female above named. Having been discovered in an attempt to poison her servant, suspicions arose concerning the previous sudden death of three persons in her family, her husband, a young officer her paramour, and an aunt from whom she derived an inheritance. They had all died in mysterious circumstances, and the lady had been their nurse. Dr. Welper

disinterred the bodies of the husband and aunt, which had been buried, the former two years and a half before at Berlin, the latter six months afterwards at Charlottenberg, and he found them not putrid, but dried up. No arsenic could be detected.

At the request of Dr. Welper, similar experiments were made on animals by Dr. Klanck, and with results strikingly conformable. Dogs poisoned with arsenic were buried in a damp cellar, and their bodies sometimes exposed to its air; yet at the end of three years, they continued dry and undecaying.

Another trial arose in Bavaria, from the following circumstances: A lady near Bayreuth died after five days' illness, under symptoms of violent general irritation of the alimentary canal. In a short time suspicions were excited, and the supposed criminal was implicated so far as to be also suspected of having poisoned two other persons. The bodies of the three individuals were accordingly disinterred—one of them five months, another six months, and the third fourteen months after death. In all of them, the external parts were not putrid, but hard, cheesy, or adipocirous; in the two last, the stomach and intestines were so entire as to allow of their being tied, taken out, cut up, and handled; and in one, a sloughy spot was found in the region of the pylorus. Arsenic was detected in two of the bodies, by Rose's process of analysis.*

Several other instances, both in man and animals, are cited by Dr. Christison; and I shall have occasion to revert to the subject when speaking of the detection of the poison by chemical tests, in bodies interred for a length of time.

But this preservation of the animal textures does not occur in all cases of poisoning with arsenic; and it therefore becomes a question, why bodies sometimes run rapidly into putrefaction, while at other times its progress is thus either delayed or prevented. The diversity is supposed by Dr. Christison to be owing, in the former instance, to the discharge of most or all of the arsenic by vomiting; and he suggests that this circumstance, in consequence of the unnatural supply of moisture, and the incipient disorganization, may even induce

* Noticed under the head of Tests. This case (which is quoted from Bachmann) and the preceding, are taken from Christison, p. 312, etc.

an earlier decay of the stomach than of other parts. It is also probable that the place of burial, the nature of the soil, and the condition of the air, exercise a material influence.

Effects on animals. This subject deserves consideration, from the aid it may afford in determining on the nature of the symptoms and morbid appearances in the human system. Several able observers and experimentalists have directed their attention to it.

Dr. Jaeger, of Stuttgard, examined the effects of this substance on all classes of organized bodies, vegetable and animal; and most of his experiments were made with a solution of the white oxide in water, in the proportion of one to sixteen. He found it a general and quick poison for plants at every period of their life, with the exception perhaps of a few of the simplest forms of vegetable existence. Their various parts died in succession, as the particles of the poison reached them. In animals, death was preceded in every instance, from the infusory animalculæ up to man, by inordinate motions; and the secretion of lymph was increased most remarkably from the mucous membranes. Frequent fluid stools took place in all classes of animals; in those in which mucus is secreted on the surface, it was remarkably increased, and crabs ejected a great deal of froth from the bronchial openings. The power of voluntary motion, and susceptibility for external stimuli, decreased; the respiration of those animals which breathe by lungs became difficult and laborious, and warm-blooded animals experienced extraordinary thirst. In birds and mammalia, frequent and violent vomiting took place, and commonly was the commencement of the scene to which convulsions put an end. Rabbits, however, which ruminate, did not vomit.

Arsenic exerted the most powerful effects when it was injected into the veins, or applied to a bleeding wound;* next,

* There can be no doubt of the truth of this statement. Dr. Gordon quotes the following experiments, given to him by his friend Dr. Campbell, which prove how small a quantity externally applied is sufficient to destroy life. Five drops of a saturated solution of the white oxide of arsenic were placed in a wound in the neck of a young cat. The animal was seized with vomiting, and died in four days. The stomach internally was much inflamed near the pylorus, and the small intestines were also greatly inflamed both internally and externally. In another instance, two drops of *arsenic acid* (the effects of which only differ in being more powerful and rapid) were put on the head of a cat, and she was dead in twenty-four hours. Vomiting took place,

when it was introduced into the stomach, but less so when it was injected into the large intestines, which have fewer absorbing vessels. Applied to the sound skin, and to a wounded muscle, if dry, it seldom produced any effect; and animals covered with scales or shells, did not suffer at all from the external application of arsenic. Applied directly to the nerves, it was inert. Lastly, he found that animals were never killed more certainly or quickly by arsenic, than when it was injected into the abdomen; but upon this he lays no stress, as the same effect was produced by most infusions.

In whatever way the arsenic was applied, Dr. Jaeger observed after death no change upon the skin. The gullet, and in birds the crops also, exhibited generally a slight redness; and further down, purple-red stripes, more numerous in the vicinity of the cardia, which, as well as the stomach-itself, in animals having a soft villous coat to their stomachs, was sometimes of an uniform purple-red colour, and sometimes spotted with it. The muscular stomach of graminivorous birds, however, showed no appearance of redness; and in the aponeurotic portion of the stomach of a horse poisoned by arsenic, there were no traces of inflammation, which was otherwise general. The villous coat of the stomach is almost always softened, and as if macerated, and also somewhat swollen; and in general, it can be easily torn, or rubbed off in pieces with the finger, from the coat beneath it. The inflammatory redness is not seated in the villous coat, which remains perfectly white, but in the nervous coat, which is remarkably red, and exhibits every where purple-red warts or eminences. The author, however, often saw this separation of the villous from the nervous coat, without any inflammatory redness of the latter. These changes continue, though in a less degree, through the small, to the vicinity of the large intestines, which are in general free from them, and only contain an increased quantity of effused mucus; but the rectum again is inflamed, and its inner coat swollen and softened. These appearances are not constant, and are very various in degree.

and the stomach and oesophagus were inflamed. (Gordon, p. 19.) It is also confirmed by Mr. Brodie's experiments.

The other mucous membranes were less generally affected, but he sometimes found the trachea red and inflamed, and in one instance the urethra of a dog. In no instance, real inflammation of the peritoneum, but its vessels were always turgid with stagnating blood. The voluntary muscles were constantly and universally rigid; the limbs sometimes bent, but generally extended; the heart, urinary bladder, gall bladder and intestines, were rarely contracted, but frequently distended by their contents. The veins, especially of the abdomen, were constantly turgid with much black fluid blood, and a similar stagnation was observed in the cavities of the heart, especially of the right side. The lungs in general were natural, as was also the brain.

Putrefaction seemed neither to be hastened nor retarded by their being poisoned with arsenic, whether they were buried or not.

He however remarked, that the immediate contact of the arsenical solution, seemed in some degree to retard the putrefaction of the part, to which it was applied in sufficient quantity.

As to the local effects of arsenic, he observed that when applied to the sound skin, it seldom injured it. If applied to a wound, it never, after death, was observed to be gangrenous or inflamed; was rarely swollen, but generally pale; and for a considerable extent, the subcutaneous cellular membrane was filled with much stagnant, gelatinous fluid. The œsophagus, stomach and intestines, were commonly, though not always, inflamed when arsenic was administered by the mouth. He never noticed real erosions, ulcerations and gangrene of the viscera. In the horse already mentioned, and into whose jugular vein two ounces of arsenical solution were injected, and which was put to death twenty-nine hours afterwards, there were only some discoloured spots in the left ventricle.*

Mr. Brodie of London, performed numerous experiments on animals with arsenic, and in doing so, either applied it to

* Review of Jaeger's Inaug. Dissert. *de Effectibus Arsenici in Varios Organismos*, &c. in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 80 to 84.

a wound, or injected into the stomach. The results were similar in all essential circumstances. The symptoms were, 1. Paralysis of the hind legs, and afterwards of the other parts of the body; convulsions, dilatation of the pupils of the eyes, and insensibility. 2. A feeble, slow, and intermitting pulse. 3. Pain in the region of the abdomen; preternatural secretion of mucus from the alimentary canal, and sickness and vomiting in those animals which are capable of vomiting. These three classes of symptoms respectively indicate disorder of the heart, brain and alimentary canal. Mr. Brodie also found that the symptoms occurred sooner when the arsenic was applied to a wound, than when it is given internally.

In whatever way the poison is administered, the inflammation is confined to the stomach and intestines. He never observed any appearances of it in the pharynx or œsophagus.* This inflammation took place more readily indeed from the external application of the poison, than from its administration internally, and it preceded any appearance of inflammation of the wound. The degree of inflammation varied considerably. In some it was very slight, in others considerable, and it appears to be greater or less according to the time which elapses before the animal dies. The mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines assumes a florid red colour, becomes soft and pulpy, and is separable without much difficulty from the cellular coat, which has its natural appearance. In some instances there are small spots of extravasated blood on the inner surface of the mucous membrane, or between it and the cellular coat, and this occurs independently of vomiting. Mr. Brodie never found ulceration or sloughing of the stomach or intestines, but he suggests, that if the animal survives for a certain length of time after the inflammation has begun, it is reasonable to conclude that it may terminate in one or other of these ways; and it is important not to mistake the layers of coagulated blood for sloughs.†

* Dr. Campbell, however, in several experiments with the white oxide externally applied, found the œsophagus greatly inflamed. This appearance was witnessed by Dr. Gordon. (Gordon, p. 20.) Orfila mentions it as a common circumstance in persons dead from poison, and he also quotes a case in which it was distinctly observed. (Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 140.)

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 8, p. 459, from Philosophical Transactions. From his experiments, Mr. Brodie draws the conclusion that arsenic does not produce its deleterious effects, until it has passed into the circulation.

I shall lastly mention the result of a number of experiments made by Dr. Duncan, Jr. and Dr. Campbell. They are summed up by the former as follows: "1. Arsenic does not act chemically on animal matter, living or dead. 2. Its chief effects are to produce a disease somewhat analogous to cholera morbus, whether it be taken directly into the stomach itself, or inserted into the subcutaneous cellular membrane of a remote part, or applied to a delicate membrane. In some few cases, where the action of the poison is most intense, death occurs from the sickness or fainting, without vomiting or purging. 3. Frequently a considerable interval intervenes between its being received, even in solution, into the stomach, and its action. 4. Neither paralysis of the voluntary muscles, nor convulsions, nor delirium, nor coma, nor disordered respiration or circulation, are ordinary symptoms of the disease produced by arsenic. 5. After death, we were frequently unable to discover any organic lesion, and we generally found that the inflammation was less, in proportion as the arsenic was more speedily fatal."*

When arsenic was *introduced after death* into the rectum of animals, and allowed to remain there for twenty-four hours, the mucous membrane in contact with it became of a lively red colour, with darker interspersed patches as if from extravasation. The other coats were natural, and even the mucous was so, unless the poison actually touched it. The margin of the coloration was abrupt, and well defined. When the arsenic was not introduced until twenty-four hours after death, the part to which it was applied presented dark patches, while the rest of the membrane was healthy. The result of the application of arsenic during life, was, on the contrary, a redness which extended to some distance from the points with which the poison had been in contact, and then passed gradually into the healthy colour of the surrounding membrane.†

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 11, p. 127. In a recent examination at Paris, of seven horses poisoned by the arseniate of potash, inflammation of the stomach, intestines and bladder was seen either separately or conjointly, and in all of them there were numerous ecchymoses at the base of the left ventricle of the heart. Every other part of that organ was healthy. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 12, p. 404.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 540.

Chemical proofs. The tests of arsenic have been the subject of extensive and animated discussion. I should occupy a large portion of this volume, were I to enter into a critical examination of them; and the result, after all, might be to perplex the learner. I prefer, therefore, to point out and dwell on the more important, designate others of inferior value, and make full references to authorities for the student.

Arsenious acid is met with in two forms; as a snow white powder, and in solid masses, generally opaque, and sometimes translucent. When newly sublimed, it is almost transparent, and has a vitreous lustre. The change to opacity occurs from keeping it, and this hence is possibly owing to the action of the atmosphere.* Guibourt has found the opaque variety most soluble in water. The powder is obtained by grinding down the massy arsenic.

Specific gravity. Authors do not exactly agree on this. Dr. Ure says it is 3.729. Transparent varieties, according to Guibourt, have a specific gravity of 3.7385; and the opaque, 3.695. Dr. John K. Mitchell and Mr. Durand, of Philadelphia, found that specimens of the transparent vary from 3.208 to 3.338, while the opaque was 3.656.† Bergman placed it as high as 5.0, but this is evidently inaccurate.

Solubility. On this there is also considerable diversity of statement. According to Bergman, 80 parts of water at 60° Fahr. dissolve one part of arsenic, while the same is dissolved by 15 parts of boiling water. Navier asserts that 80 parts of boiling water are requisite to dissolve one part. Klaproth, from a series of experiments, found that 400 parts of cold water at 60° dissolve one part, while 13 parts of boiling water were sufficient for the same purpose. He also examined how much of the oxide would be retained by the boiling water after it was cold, and found that 100 parts retained three of the oxide, and the remainder separated in the form of tetrahedral crystals.‡ Guibourt has recently found that 1000 parts of

* Kruger imagines that a hydrate is formed. (Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 4, p. 214.) This is, however, doubted by Berzelius, as no appreciable difference in weight can be discovered.

† Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 4, p. 103.

‡ Annals of Philosophy, vol. 4, p. 132.

temperate water dissolve, in thirty-six hours, 9.6 of the transparent, and 12.5 of the opaque variety; and the same quantity of boiling water dissolves, of the transparent, 97 parts, retaining 18 when cooled; but of the opaque, takes up 115, and retains on cooling 29.* Hahnemann remarked, that at the temperature of the blood, 1000 parts dissolve ten parts, with the aid of ten minutes' agitation.† The solubility of arsenic is much impaired by the presence of organic principles, as milk or mucus, in the water. This readily explains the fact why the poison is so often found in the solid state in the stomach.

Taste. The common statement in most systematic works, is that it is acrid. Dr. Christison, from experiment, is of opinion that it has scarcely any taste at all, but probably, if any, is rather sweetish. Certainly it has been swallowed, with many articles of food, without the individual being aware of any acidity. The mistake on this point may have arisen from confounding the inflammation subsequently induced in the throat, with the impression in the act of swallowing.‡

Effect of heat. The oxide of arsenic is sublimed at 380° F. and condenses in the form of a crystalline powder.§ If the operation be performed slowly, and on small quantities, the crystals are octahedral. When mixed with charcoal, and heated, it is reduced, and the metal sublimed. Berzelius says that it begins to sublime at nascent red heat.|| Dr. Mitchell, on the other hand, found the temperature required was a *red heat visible in the dark.*¶

Tests of the oxide of arsenic in the solid state.

(a.) The process of REDUCTION is here to be employed. The

* Guibourt, Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, vol. 1, p. 318, from Journal de Chimie Médicale.

† Christison, p. 228.

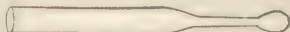
‡ Christison, p. 227. Dr. Gordon, in his Inaugural Dissertation, p. 9, says that it is sweet. Hahnemann is of the same opinion, according to Dr. Christison. For authorities and facts in confirmation of Dr. Christison's opinion, see his communications in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 28, p. 96; vol. 33, p. 70. Turner's Chemistry, p. 562, 5th edition.

§ Christison. Thomson says 383°; Bergman, 388°.

|| Chimie, vol. 2, p. 429.

¶ American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 10, p. 122.

only instrument necessary is a glass tube; and the best form of it, when the quantity of arsenic is small and probably impure, is that recommended by Berzelius, and represented in the accompanying figure.



Its length should be about three inches; and its diameter, according to Berzelius, should not be more than from $\frac{1}{7}$ to $\frac{1}{10}$ of an inch. The matter employed, should not fill above three-fourths of an inch.

The arsenic should be mixed with about three times its weight of freshly ignited charcoal. This is decidedly preferable to the black flux, which was formerly employed.* If the suspected substance be large in quantity, it may be mixed with the charcoal before it is introduced into the tube; but if small, it may be better to drop it into the tube, and then cover it over with charcoal. For the purpose of introduction, a small glass funnel is the best; and to it may be previously fitted a brass or silver wire, for pushing down the matter that adheres. It is of importance that the materials to be tested should all be collected together, and this object is best effected by the use of the funnel. In order to prevent the consequences of expansion, they should not be too closely rammed together.

Heat is best applied with the spirit lamp.† The upper part of the material or the charcoal should be first heated with a small flame. Then apply the heat to the bottom of the tube with an enlarged flame, and any water that may form on its sides, should be removed with a roll of filtering paper. By continuing the tube in the flame, the metallic crust characteristic of arsenic, will soon be formed. "The surface next the tube is almost exactly like polished steel, being a little darker in colour, but equal in brilliancy and polish, and the inner surface is either brilliantly crystalline to the naked eye, like the

* "The *black flux* may be said to consist of charcoal in a state of extremely minute division, and the subcarbonate of potash. It is prepared by deflagrating in a crucible, two parts of supertartrate of potash, with one part of nitrate of potash." (R. Phillips. *Annals*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 35.)

† Mr. Phillips and Mr. Brande appear each to have recommended this, but the first more particularly called the attention of chemists to it. (*Annals*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 36, vol. 10, p. 300.)

fracture of cast iron, or has a dull grayish-white colour, but appears crystalline before a common magnifying lens of four or five powers.”*

These properties are manifest even in the most minute quantities. Berzelius says, that 190th of a grain of the oxide is more than sufficient to form a good crust.†

It has been objected to this test, that other substances, when treated in the same manner, may put on a similar appearance. Dr. Paris states, that a film of very finely divided charcoal, has thus been mistaken for arsenic.‡ Antimony, when reduced is also said to resemble the crust. This, however, is totally denied by Dr. Christison. And recently Dr. Mitchell of Philadelphia, has observed that cinnabar mixed with carbon and heated, exactly counterfeits metallic arsenic in its appearance.§

If the glass tube contains lead, it may assume an appearance on the outside, resembling that of reduced arsenic. This is mentioned by Mr. Donovan, and I have repeatedly witnessed it when the heat was driven high.||

It is from circumstances like these, although I was aware of but a portion of them, and particularly from an unwillingness to recommend any particular test to *the exclusion of all others*, that I was induced to make the remarks in the previous edition on the reduction test. The dispute, if there be any, is after all, I apprehend, more in words, than in fact. No one conversant with the subject will deny, that reduction is the *confirmatory, the decisive proof*; but I also presume, that

* Christison, p. 225. For Berzelius' directions, see his chemistry, or Annals, N. S. vol. 11, p. 232.

† Rose detected one eighth of a grain, although it was mixed with animal matter. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 85.) The late Professor Gorham of Harvard University also produced a distinct metallic film from the same quantity. (New-England Journal, vol. 6, p. 228.) Dr. Traill, one tenth of a grain. (Annals, N. S. vol. 7, p. 131.) Dr. Christison, one sixteenth, one hundredth part of a grain, and even less. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 32, vol. 33, p. 68. Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 93.)

‡ Pharmacologia, p. 217.

§ American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 10, p. 126.

|| Not long since, it was hinted that if arsenic had been used in the manufacture of glass, that metal might be reduced by a high heat, and thus impair the correctness of any medico-legal experiment. This, however, has been shown to be a perfectly futile objection, by Chevallier, Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 11, p. 224. Baltimore Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 513.

no medical jurist with the reduced metal before him, would be willing to stop with that experiment, and go into court and testify to the existence of arsenic. Certainly he would omit some of the means of rendering *assurance doubly sure*.

(b.) *Oxidation of the metallic arsenic by heat.* Apply heat to the ball which now contains the flux deprived of arsenic, and attach a bit of glass tube to its end, so that it can be drawn off and leave the crust, free of any danger of contact with it. Then apply heat to the crust with the spirit lamp, till it is all converted into a white powder. This (the arsenious acid,) will then crystallize in the form of octahedrons, which can be readily seen with a proper lens.

A necessary caution in performing this experiment, is not to heat the tube too suddenly or too highly, as the oxide may otherwise unite with the glass and form a white opaque enamel. It is better to pass the tube repeatedly through the flame, till the object is effected.

(c.) A portion of the tube containing the oxide may now be filed off. Boil this in a drachm or two of distilled water, acidulate the solution in the manner hereafter directed, and apply the liquid tests to be presently described.*

(d.) Dr. Christison recommends as an additional test for the oxide in its solid state, to keep it for a few hours in a solution of the ammoniacal sulphate of copper.† It will be gradually converted into an apple green powder, forming the arsenite of copper, while the blue solution of the cupreous salt, becomes colourless. "No other substance in nature," he adds, "exhibits the same phenomenon with this agent."‡

The remaining tests are only mentioned, from having found a place in every work on medical jurisprudence. They are

* Christison, p. 236. Clark in Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 6, p. 357. Orfila has shown that *metallic arsenic* when boiled with distilled water for two hours, is so far converted into arsenious acid, as to permit the liquid tests to operate. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 2, p. 484.)

† This appears to have been suggested by Orfila. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 81.)

‡ Mr. Smithson also proposed to ascertain the presence of solid arsenic by fusing it with nitrate of potash. Arseniate of potash is the product, which gives a brick red precipitate with nitrate of silver. (Annals of Philosophy, N. S. vol. 4, p. 127.) A mode of applying this to a solution of arsenic, is given by Mr. R. Phillips, in Ibid. vol. 7, p. 35.

equivocal, besides requiring such a portion of arsenic as can hardly be spared in most cases.

(e.) *The garlic smell.* If a portion of arsenic be throw non red hot iron or burning charcoal, it will evaporate with a white smoke and a peculiar smell like garlic. Phosphorus, however, and zinc, under the same circumstances, burn with a similar odour.* Animal matter, and even paper will also sometimes imitate it.†

On the other hand, if arsenic be mixed with either a vegetable or an animal substance, the smoke and smell arising from these bodies when heated, will altogether prevent us from detecting the peculiar properties of the arsenic. Dr. Bostock mixed equal parts of arsenic and flour, and placed them on iron at a low red heat, but the suffocating smoke arising from the flour could alone be perceived.‡

It is also ascertained that the garlic odour is evolved by the sublimation of metallic arsenic only, and not by the oxide, unless it be at the same time reduced.§ Thus, Dr. Paris found that when the oxide was projected on red hot copper or iron, the garlic smell was produced, but when it was placed on a plate of copper, iron, or platina, and heat was applied by the spirit lamp or the blow pipe, no odour was perceptible. No reduction took place in this case, and the arsenious acid was dissipated before the copper could acquire a degree of temperature sufficient to deoxidize it.

(f.) *The tombac or silvery alloy.* This is produced by mixing the oxide with charcoal or the black flux, and placing it between two copper plates, which are bound together by iron wire, and then subjecting it to heat for a few minutes. On rubbing the plates, a silvery white stain will be left on the surface of the copper, which is an alloy of the two metals. This, also, is an uncertain test. Dr. Bostock placed charcoal alone, moistened with oil, between copper plates, and after applying heat in the manner just directed, found an appearance

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 35. Murray's Chemistry, vol. 3, p. 358.

† Christison, p. 237.

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 173.

§ Paris, in Brande's Journal, vol. 6, p. 342. R. Phillips, in Annals, N. S., vol. 2, p. 227.

somewhat similar to the alloy.* Dr. McNevin ascertained that oxide of tin had nearly the same effect on copper as oxide of arsenic has. If the quantity used be sufficient, it is probable that no mistake could be made in confounding the respective states of the copper; but, as I have already remarked, we can seldom spare enough for this purpose, and the use of this test must therefore be discouraged.†

Tests of oxide of arsenic in solution.

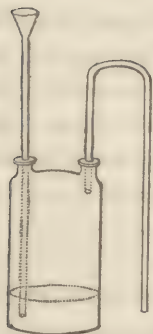
(a.) *Sulphuretted hydrogen.* If the fluid to be tested is alkaline, this gas will not act, because the precipitate it would otherwise form is soluble in the alkalies. If, on the other hand, a mineral acid be present in excess, an excess of sulphur is thrown down. This will defeat any subsequent attempts at reduction. Hence, if the suspected fluid reddens litmus, it must be neutralized with potash; if it be alkaline, it must be acidulated with acetic acid. This last, indeed, is now recommended to be used in all cases, as sulphuretted hydrogen has no action on acetic acid.

With this previous preparation of the fluid, it is to be subjected to a stream of sulphuretted hydrogen gas for ten or fifteen minutes, and the apparatus best fitted for this purpose

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 172. On this test, see Orfila, (American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 5, p. 233.); Brugnatelli, (Philosophical Magazine, vol. 43, p. 445.)

† Besides the modes of reduction mentioned in the text, I may state two others. One is recommended by Dr. A. T. Thomson. It is, to boil the suspected fluid with animal charcoal. The arsenic will be absorbed by it, and after removing the fluid, it may be reduced and sublimed by drying and heating the charcoal. This process, however, will not answer when the quantity of oxide is small. The other is the application of galvanism. This was first suggested by Jacger, and several German chemists have used it with various modifications of apparatus; but it also, from their own confessions, is not delicate. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 35; Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 108; Christison, p. 249.)

Dr. Clendenning has recommended the following method, founded on the researches of Mr. E. Davy. "A portion of the arsenical substance is mixed in a platina crucible, with a little muriatic acid. A piece of zinc foil or wire is then dipped into the mixture and stirred about gently on the bottom for one or two minutes, when the platina will be found more or less covered with a crust of metallic arsenic. On throwing away the acid fluid, and applying heat to the platina, the arsenic rose in alliaceous vapours; it also gave the arsenites of silver and copper with the tests. In this manner Dr. Clendenning successfully operated on arsenic mixed with milk, soup, coffee, tea, &c. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 12, p. 440.) For Mr. Davy's paper, see Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 9, p. 38.



is here given.* The first portions of the gas turn the arsenical solution to a bright lemon yellow colour, and the subsequent portions throw down a flocculent precipitate of a sulphur yellow tint, which is the sulphuret of arsenic. If the proportion of oxide in solution be small, there will be only a yellowness, owing to the sulphuret being soluble in an excess of sulphuretted hydrogen. This excess may be expelled by boiling, after which a distinct precipitate is obtained.

The following are the only substances that can be confounded with the sulphuret of arsenic. The salts of cadmium yield nearly the same colour, but they are very rare.† The precipitated sulphuret of cadmium also, is soluble in ammonia, which is not the case with the other.‡ The salts of selenium also give a yellow precipitate, but these also are very rare. The persalts of tin give a dirty grayish yellow precipitate, but ammonia turns it brown. The salts of antimony form an orange red precipitate, with sulphuretted hydrogen.

This is a very minute test. Children found a decided yellow colour, in an ounce of distilled water, to which one drop of arsenious acid had been added. Jaeger detected arsenic thus in a solution which bore the proportion to the water of one to 50,000, and Christison says that it acts on the oxide in a hundred thousand parts of water.§

Sulphuretted hydrogen gas should in all cases be used in preference to its solution, or to the hydro sulphate of ammonia. The ammonia of the latter may keep the arsenical sulphuret in solution.||

* The sulphuret of iron with a little water, is placed in the apparatus, and sulphuric acid poured on it through the funnel.

† It was, in fact, this very property of yielding a yellow precipitate, with sulphuretted hydrogen, that led to the discovery of cadmium by Stromeyer. (Thomson's History of Chemistry, vol. 2, p. 220.)

‡ Bischoff, Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 2, p. 231.

§ Annals, N. S., vol. 1, p. 143; Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 65; Christison, p. 242.

|| The uncertainty attending this last may be seen in Dr. Bostock's paper, (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 167; Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 104.)

(b.) *Ammoniacal nitrate of silver.* Dissolve lunar caustic in ten parts of water; add ammonia, which will precipitate the oxide of silver, and then redissolve the precipitate nearly, but not entirely, by adding gradually an excess of ammonia. In this state the ammoniacal nitrate of silver will cause, even in a weak solution of oxide of arsenic, a lively lemon yellow precipitate, the arsenite of silver, which passes to a dark brown under exposure to light.

There are, however, many impediments to the perfect action of this test. Several of the acids, as well as an excess of ammonia, prevent its due operation. Common salt, if present, will give a pale yellowish white colour to the arsenical precipitate. Dr. Forbes of Aberdeen, proposes to remove this difficulty by using the nitrate of silver alone, as long as any white precipitate falls down, then add a slight excess of it, and after subsidence to drop in ammonia. The chloride of sodium is thus removed, and the yellow arsenite of silver is formed in the last part of the process.*

But this test can not be depended upon for exhibiting its characteristic appearance, if vegetable or animal matter is present. It is useful, however, even there, as its precipitate is copious, and which may be used in any additional experiments.†

(c.) The *ammoniacal sulphate of copper* is prepared by the same process as the last test; sulphate of copper being substituted for nitrate of silver. It causes in solutions of oxide of arsenic, an apple green, or grass green precipitate. Arsenite of copper is formed.

This is also a delicate test; but its operation is prevented by the presence of ammonia and several of the acids. So al-

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 32, p. 335.

† This test was originally proposed by Mr. Joseph Hume, modified by Dr. Marcet, and finally presented in its present form by the original proposer. Its history, and discussions concerning its value, may be found in Philosophical Magazine, vol. 33, p. 401; vol. 40, p. 105, 179, 296, 333, 431; vol. 51, p. 149.

Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 157; vol. 3, p. 342; vol. 6, p. 663, papers of Drs. Marcet and Roget.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 64.

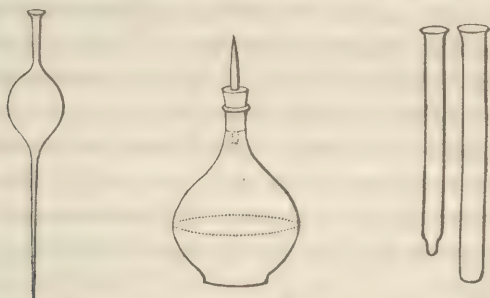
Annals of Philosophy, vol. 3, p. 152. Ibid. N. S. vol. 1, p. 142; vol. 7, p. 33: Mr.

Richard Phillips. Ibid. N. S. vol. 10, p. 60; Dr. Paris.

London Medical Repository, vol. 8, p. 178; Dr. Thomson.

so vegetable infusions and animal fluids prevent its characteristic colour; and again a green colour is produced by its action on different substances when arsenic is not present.*

(d.) *Reduction of sulphuret of arsenic, as obtained by process (a.)* After the precipitate has been allowed to subside, and the supernatant fluid has been removed by the pipette, the remainder is poured on a filter. When all the fluid has passed through, the portions of the precipitate on the upper part of the filter are washed down to the bottom by means of the instrument here represented.† The filter is then gently compressed between folds of bibulous paper, and the sulphuret is removed with the point of a knife before it dries, and dried in little masses on a watch glass by the side of a chamber fire, or still better in a vapour bath. Or again, the sulphuret may be allowed completely to subside, and then poured into a small glass tube of either of the accompanying forms.



Add boiling water to this, and having repeated this a sufficient number of times, pouring off the water each time until

* On this test, see Dr. Bostock, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 5, p. 169; *Paris' Pharmacologia and Medical Jurisprudence*.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 13, p. 519; vol. 21, p. 427.

Annals of Philosophy, N. S. vol. 7, p. 33.

Braconnot on the Schweinfurt green, *Edinburgh Journal of Science*, vol. 10, p. 358.

On the liquid tests generally, see Dr. Murray, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 41, p. 365. He proposes to apply them for testing solid arsenic; and in *ibid.* vol. 42, p. 86, to its detection in mixed fluids.

Dr. Brown on the tests of arsenious acid; *United States Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 1, p. 11.

Dr. Feuchtwanger's Remarks on Arsenic; *Silliman's Journal*, vol. 19, p. 339.

† This is a thin bottle capable of standing the fire, half filled with water, and having its cork pierced with a small tube drawn at its outer end to a very fine bore. The breath is impelled into the bottle, and the bottle being then reversed, a very fine stream issues with great force. This instrument for washing down scanty precipitates on filters was invented by Berzelius. The figure on the left represents a pipette.

the subsidence is completed, the last portions of water may be gently driven off by heat, and wiped off the inside of the tube as they condense. The bottom of the tube which contains the precipitate, may now be cut off with a file.

In either case, drop the sulphuret into the tube figured at page 352, and cover it by means of the funnel, (see page 352,) with a flux consisting of an alkaline carbonate and charcoal, either the black flux, or a mixture of two parts of ignited carbonate of soda and one of charcoal. Heat must first be applied to the part containing the flux, and the continuance of its application reduces the metal as in the case of the oxide.*

These tests are ample and conclusive for the detection of arsenic in the fluid state, and if they unite in presenting its characteristic results, the proof is complete.

It is, however, proper very briefly to mention some other tests that have been proposed.

1. *Lime water* gives a fine white precipitate with arsenious acid in solution—the arsenite of lime. This is a favorite with the German chemists.† But it acts on numerous other substances in a similar manner, and again it does not act if the solution contains free nitric, muriatic and acetic acids.

2. *Chromate of potash* has been proposed by Dr. Cooper. It causes when added to a solution of arsenious acid, a grass green precipitate in about half an hour. This is the protoxide of chrome.‡

3. *Iodide of potassium* has been recommended by Professor Emmet of the University of Virginia. It gives a white pre-

* Berzelius has also recommended the following. After a portion of the sulphuret has been introduced into the tube, insert a piece of steel piano forte wire an inch long, so as to reach the surface of the sulphuret. Heat the wire with a spirit lamp, and continue it until the sulphuret, in a state of vapour, passes along the heated iron. In this way sulphuret of iron and metallic arsenic are obtained. The operation should be conducted slowly. (Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, vol. 2, p. 338.)

† Jagger speaks of it as a delicate test. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 84.) Lime water also enters into the processes recommended by Rose and Fischer. (Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 135.)

‡ Silliman's Journal, vol. 4, p. 159. See also *ibid.* vol. 3, p. 354. Dr. Silliman (Chemistry, vol. 2, p. 193,) says, "this appears to be one of the best tests that we possess." Dr. Reid, however, mentions (Chemistry, p. 346,) that if a solution of bichromate of potash be added to a solution of tartar emetic, the liquid will assume the same green colour as with arsenic. This was pointed out by Mr. Laurence Reid, and the test of course is useless in any case where tartar emetic is supposed to have been used.

precipitate, which on the addition of nitric acid, changes to a dark brown, purple or black, according to the quantity. If starch be added at the same time, the deep blue tint, indicative of iodine, is present. Muriatic acid turns it to a bright yellow.*

Tests of oxide of arsenic when mixed with organic fluids and solids, and with the contents and tissues of the stomach.

It is safest in medico-legal cases, to take the stomach itself, cut it into small shreds, and boil it in distilled water, along with any fluids that may be found in it. This should be continued for half an hour. The coarser solid particles are then separated by a gauze filter, and the fluid is filtered through paper. This filtration occupies at least thirty-six hours.

In order to free the fluid from animal matter, acetic acid should be added. And before applying sulphuretted hydrogen, it may be advisable to use the nitrate of silver as a trial test in the manner already recommended. For this purpose, neutralize the fluid with ammonia or potash, and test a few drops with ammoniacal nitrate of silver. If it gives its characteristic precipitate, the process may be proceeded with; if not, evaporate the solution with a moderate heat to dryness, form a new solution by boiling successive portions of distilled water on the residue, and when cool, filter this solution.

The remaining steps are similar to those already described, acidulation with acetic acid, precipitation by sulphuretted hydrogen, reduction of the sulphuret and oxidation of the metal. If the sulphuret after boiling does not subside easily, add a little muriate of ammonia to the fluid, and if the fluid still continues muddy, and the deposition is not complete, allow it to remain at rest for forty eight hours or more.†

Besides this process, others have been recommended by various writers. Orfila at one period, proposed to decolorize by chlorine, and supposed that the liquid tests would then act. Mr. Phillips advised to agitate the fluid with animal charcoal. Rose recommended the German process of forming arseniate of lime and reducing it with charcoal and boracic acid. Rapp's process consisted in deflagrating the organic matter, and pe-

* Silliman's Journal, vol, 18, p. 58.

† Christison, p. 252.

oxidating the oxide of arsenic, by means of fused nitrate of potash. Dr. Paris has advised that the whole arsenic be thrown down with ammoniated nitrate of silver, and the precipitate reduced in a tube. Berzelius boils the suspected substance in potash, neutralizes the solution with muriatic acid, adds sulphuretted hydrogen, and then boils and evaporates till the precipitate subsides. The precipitate is then collected, dried, mixed with nitre in a large proportion, and deflagrated in a tube. The product is then dissolved in an excess of lime water, and the arseniate of lime so formed is collected and reduced with charcoal.

Orfila has recently recommended the following process, in order to destroy the animal matter previous to using the sulphuretted hydrogen. Boil the suspected fluid in nitric acid; then neutralize with potash; add muriatic acid in slight excess; then pour in sulphuretted hydrogen water; boil, and allow the precipitate to subside; it must then be thrown on a filter, and as it contains an excess of sulphur, wash the sulphuret with diluted ammonia, and finally throw down the sulphuret with hydrochloric acid.*

Having thus noticed the symptoms and the morbid appearances induced by arsenic, as well as the chemical means for its detection, it remains to mention some medico-legal cases. The records of criminal jurisprudence in every civilized country, unfortunately abound in these; and they are peculiarly

* The following authorities on the detection of arsenic in mixed fluids, are worthy of careful study:

On the detection of minute portions of arsenic in mixed fluids, by Prof. Christison. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 60.)

An account of several cases of poisoning with arsenic, in illustration of the delicacy of the chemical evidence, etc. by Prof. Christison. (Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 273.)

Paris and Fonblanque, vol. 2, p. 252.

Thomson's London Dispensatory, p. 177. Berzelius' *Chimie*, vol. 2, p. 447.

Berzelius, *Edinburgh Journal of Science*, vol. 4, p. 131.

Giske's account of Rose and Berzelius' process. (*Brande's Journal*, vol. 20, p. 398.)

R. Phillips, *Annals of Philosophy*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 31; vol. 10, p. 300.

Dr. Christison, *Ibid.* vol. 12, p. 25.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy, *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 546.

Dr. Venables, *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 6, p. 615; vol. 10, p. 115. *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 9, p. 524.

Tauffer's method, by treating the mixed fluids with a solution of oxide of zinc in potash. *Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy*, vol. 7, p. 71. *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 16, p. 240.

Reid's *Chemistry*, p. 347.

interesting to the student in legal medicine, as they either illustrate the errors and omissions of professional witnesses, or their skill and accuracy. In the former case, much allowance must be made for the imperfect state of knowledge, arising from a neglect of the science. This cannot, however, be conceded at present. Every physician who now offers himself as a witness, has the means of accurate knowledge within his power.

The case of Miss Blandy. This is interesting, as it gives us the mode pursued to detect arsenic nearly a century since.

Mary Blandy was tried in February, 1752, at Oxford, for poisoning her father with arsenic. It appears that she fell in love with a Capt. Cranstoun, and that her father was averse to her marriage with him. The wretch then seems to have formed the plan of destroying him, in order to obtain possession both of his daughter and his property; and for this purpose forwarded arsenic to Miss Blandy, which she was induced from time to time to mix in his food and drink. It produced prickings and heat in his tongue and throat, and burning pains in his stomach and bowels, which went off with vomitings and purgings. His health sunk under this dreadful regimen, and in particular he observed that his teeth decayed very rapidly. Several females who had accidentally taken of the tea in which the poison was mixed, were also seized with vomitings and purgings, and suffered greatly. At last, on the 6th of August, she appears to have added a larger quantity than usual to his water gruel. He was attacked with all his former symptoms, but with double violence; the abdomen swelled, and there was excessive pain and prickings over every part of his body. On the 10th, Dr. Anthony Addington visited him, and found his tongue swelled, his throat slightly inflamed and excoriated, his eyes inflamed, his pulse low, trembling and intermitting, and his respiration difficult; there was also an inability to swallow even the smallest quantity. The patient stated that he had had several bloody stools. During the next two days, he appeared somewhat relieved, except that the rectum was ulcerated and painful; but on Tuesday (13th,) a slight delirium, with a short cough, and ulcerous

discharges from the rectum supervened, and death ensued on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the body was examined. "The back, and hinder part of his arms, thighs and legs, were livid. The heart was variegated with purple spots. The lungs resembled bladders half filled with air, and blotted in some places with pale, but in most with black ink. The liver and spleen were much discoloured; the former looked as if it had been boiled, but that part of it which covered the stomach was particularly dark. The kidneys were stained with livid spots. The stomach and bowels were inflated, and appeared, before any incision was made into them, as if they had been pinched, and extravasated blood had stagnated between their membranes; they contained nothing but a slimy, bloody froth; their coats were remarkably smooth, thin and flabby. The wrinkles of the stomach were totally obliterated. The internal coat of the stomach and duodenum, especially about the orifice of the former, was prodigiously inflamed and excoriated. There was no scirrhus in any gland of the abdomen, no adhesion of the lungs, nor indeed the least trace of a natural decay in any part whatever."

A portion of the powder found at the bottom of the gruel administered to Mr. Blandy, was handed to Dr. Addington. He gave a part of this to Mr. King, a chemist in Reading, who examined it, and declared it to be white arsenic. On the remainder he experimented himself, and came to a similar result. The question was asked him, Why do you believe it to be white arsenic? He replied, "For the following reasons:

1. This powder has a milky whiteness; so has white arsenic.
2. This is gritty, and almost insipid; so is white arsenic.
3. Part of it swims on the surface of cold water, like a pale sulphureous film, but the greatest part sinks to the bottom and remains there undissolved; the same is true of white arsenic.
4. This thrown on red-hot iron, does not flame, but rises entirely in thick white fumes, which have the stench of garlic, and cover cold iron, held just over them, with white flowers; white arsenic does the same.
5. I boiled ten grains of this powder in four ounces of clear water, and then passing the

decoction through a filter, divided it into five equal parts, which were put into as many glasses. Into one glass, I poured a few drops of spirits of sal ammoniac; into another, some of the lixivium of tartar; into the third, some strong spirit of vitriol; into the fourth, some spirit of salt; and into the last, some syrup of violets. The spirit of sal ammoniac threw down a few particles of pale sediment; the lixivium of tartar gave a white cloud, which hung a little above the middle of the glass; the spirits of vitriol and salt made a considerable precipitation of a lightish coloured substance, which, in the former, hardened into glittering crystals, sticking to the sides and bottom of the glass; syrup of violets produced a beautiful green tincture. Having washed the saucepan, funnel, and glasses used in the foregoing experiments, very clean, and provided a fresh filter, I boiled ten grains of white arsenic, bought of Mr. Wilcock, druggist in Reading, in four ounces of clean water, and filtering and dividing it into five equal parts, proceeded with them just as I had done with the former decoction. There was an exact similitude between the experiments made on the two decoctions. They corresponded so nicely on each trial, that I declare I never saw any two things in nature more alike, than the decoction made with the powder found in Mr. Blandy's gruel, and that made with white arsenic. From these experiments, and others which I am ready to produce if desired, I believe that powder to be white arsenic."

Miss Blandy was condemned and executed, denying to the last any knowledge of a noxious quality in the powder she gave to her father.*

Case of Donnal. Mr. Donnal, a surgeon, at Falmouth, in England, was tried in 1817, for poisoning his mother-in-law, Mrs. Downing. It appeared in evidence that she had breakfasted and dined at the prisoner's house in October, and returned home very ill, retching and vomiting, with a very violent cramp, and she continued so for three or four days after. On Sunday, the 2d of November, she was prevailed upon to drink tea with him again. She was then in perfect health,

* Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 10, p. 1,

and had just come out of church. Cocoa was provided for her, and while drinking part of the second cup she was taken very sick. Dr. Edwards was called in between 4 and 5 A. M. of the 3d, and found her very drowsy, and her pulse fluttering. According to the prisoner, she had been labouring under an attack of cholera morbus. Death followed in fourteen hours after taking the cocoa.

On dissection, the stomach was found partially inflamed, being stellated in several places. Its villous coat was softened, and in some parts nearly destroyed. The large intestines were also inflamed in different places. The lungs and liver were sound.

Dr. Edwards applied the liquid tests of sulphate of copper and ammoniaco-nitrate of silver, to the contents of the stomach, and they each gave the characteristic appearances of arsenic.

On the part of the prisoner, it was urged that the disease was cholera morbus, and that in persons dead from it, the stomach would present a similar appearance. Dr. Neale also deposed that he had tried the silver test on a decoction of onions, (the deceased had eaten onions on the day before she died,) and that a yellowish cloud was produced. He then varied the experiment by adding phosphate of soda, (the acid of which is present in the human fluids,) and a yellow precipitate fell down. The copper test used on the onions gave a green precipitate. He considered the reduction of the metal as the only decisive test. It is greatly to be regretted that this was omitted. The prisoner was acquitted.*

Mary Smith, a farmer's wife, near Dundee, was tried at Edinburgh, in February, 1827, for administering poison to her servant, Margaret Warden. The deceased was pregnant by the prisoner's son. It appears that the supposed poison had been twice given to her. From the first, which was taken at night, no decided effects seem to have occurred. She however complained of pain, and was said to have vomited. The second dose produced thirst, vomiting and purging, and vio-

* The evidence on this trial is given in *Paris's Medical Jurisprudence*, vol. 3: Appendix, p. 277, and *Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence*, p. 212.

lent pain in the bowels, and these were followed by prostration, stupor, cold extremities and a feeble pulse. Death ensued in about 36 hours.

The body was disinterred twenty-two days after, and although there were marks of considerable putrefaction externally, yet the stomach and bowels were in a state of "wonderful preservation." The inner coat of the stomach was raised and separated in many places from the adjoining ones, and in other parts was corrugated or abraded. Blood was extravasated under it. The intestines also bore marks of vascular excitement.

The fluid found in the stomach amounted to ten or twelve ounces, and yellow particles floated in it. Similar particles also adhered to the villous coat, or were imbedded in its substance. The physicians of Dundee examined a portion of the contents by the liquid tests, and then reduced some with the black flux. With each, indications of arsenic were given. Dr. Christison made a similar investigation, and also obtained the metal.

For the defence, the only points suggested were the possibility of cholera causing these fatal effects, and the uncertainty of post mortem appearances after so long a period. The prisoner was acquitted. She may have been innocent; but the only satisfactory alternative is, that it was a case of suicide.*

Case of Wishart. The prisoner was accused of poisoning her pregnant sister. The porridge in which the arsenic was placed was eaten on Tuesday evening, and as far as testimony could be procured, the usual symptoms occurred. On Friday, the deceased was delivered of a living child, and on Saturday she died. The body was disinterred eight days after. There was a small perforation in the stomach, and its villous coat was very vascular, and in some places abraded. The intestines were also very red.

The contents of the stomach and portions of that viscous were submitted to the action of tests, but in none of these

* Syme's *Justiciary Reports*, p. 93; *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 27, p. 141, vol. 28, p. 84, 94. Mr. Alison (*Practice of the Criminal Law of Scotland*, p. 89,) says that the court considered this case as proved.

did the silver and copper tests give any indications of arsenic. Sulphuretted hydrogen, however, after the liquor had been acidulated with acetic acid, yielded a yellow precipitate, which was reduced by the black flux. Dr. Christison afterwards converted the crust, by repeated sublimation, into little octahedral crystals of oxide of arsenic, which he estimated to amount to about the fortieth part of a grain. In the stomach there were appearances of the sulphuret. The prisoner was convicted and executed.*

The following is a French case:

In August 1832, a couple named Terrier and their mother, then in good health, experienced severe colic and nausea, followed by violent vomiting, after having eaten of cabbage soup. Several other persons who had partaken of it were similarly affected. The husband died in 48 hours, and his mother 72 days thereafter; while the widow, although her life was saved, continued incurably infirm. The disease present was pronounced to be gastro-enteritis.

One Urbain X. succeeded to their property, and it was shortly ascertained that he was in possession of a large quantity of arsenic. On the 24th of July, 1832, he had called to dine with a brother and sister of law, and chatting about the quality of their new corn, expressed a wish to see it. The wife who was about to bake, had recently put flour in the chest. She showed this flour to Urbain, who took up a handful of it, and in a few seconds threw it back again into the chest, saying it was better than his. On the 26th she made her bread. Her husband and son, herself and ten other persons ate of it, and all were attacked with a violent colic and frequent vomiting. If they resumed the use of the bread the accident recurred. When its use was abstained from, it ceased. Bread was then made with other flour proceeding from the same corn and ground at the same time, and this produced no ill effect. Had the female and her son died, Urbain would also have inherited their fortune.

These facts led to a chemical examination of the bread.

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 18; Syme's Justiciary Reports, Appendix, p. 1.

Two chemists were commissioned, but could find no deleterious substance. It was then committed to Orfila. He cut the bread into small pieces, treated it with distilled water, filtered the liquid and tested it by concentrated liquid sulphuretted hydrogen. The fluid became instantly yellow, but was not sensibly troubled. A few drops of muriatic acid were now added, to precipitate any sulphuret of arsenic that might form. It was not until *several days had elapsed*, that a yellow precipitate consisting of sulphuret of arsenic and organic matter was deposited.

This precipitate was repeatedly washed with distilled water, then placed on a little filter and washed with very weak ammonia. Thus the sulphuret was dissolved, and the organic matters left. The ammoniacal solution was now evaporated to dryness, and the residuum mixed with a little charcoal and carbonate of potash. Gentle heat was again applied, to drive off any further organic matter that might be present. And finally the watch glass and its contents were pulverized in a mortar, and the powder introduced into a tube, the upper end of which was drawn out in the spirit lamp. As soon as it became of a red heat, metallic arsenic quickly appeared.

This evidence caused the conviction of Urbain.*

Case of Mina and Mrs. Chapman. This is a wretched story of adultery and murder, which occurred in Pennsylvania in 1831. The prisoner became a lodger in the house of Chapman, the deceased, and either seduced his wife, or what is more probable, was seduced by her. It would seem that there was an unsuccessful attempt to poison Mr. Chapman on the 17th of June, but of this he recovered. On Monday the 20th the arsenic was given to him in soup. He soon complained of burning heat in the stomach, and vomiting and purging appear to have followed; but no physician was called in, and no one saw him until the 21st, when Dr. Knight found

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 9, p. 410. *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 12, p. 298. In another case, where a poisoned *bouilli* had been eaten, and several experimentalists declared that they could find no poisonous ingredient in it, Orfila found it equally refractory with tests, until it had been boiled for a quarter of an hour, to remove the animal matter. The albumen present was thus coagulated, and after filtration, the liquor gave an abundant yellow precipitate, with sulphuretted hydrogen, (*Lancet*, N. S. vol. 8, 318.)

him complaining of the above symptoms and thirst. He was deaf, his extremities were cold, and he was delirious at times, although no fever was present, and the pulse was very feeble. Dr. Phillips saw him on the afternoon of the 22d. He was now evidently moribund, the skin was shrunken, the hearing almost gone, and a bloody sanies or serum was passed by stool. He was calm and rather comatose for an hour or two before death, which happened at 5 A. M. of the 23d.

It should be understood that the above physicians rather visited as friends than in their medical capacity, until the last day. Having heard of his illness, they called to inquire how he was.

On the 5th of July, Mrs. Chapman was married to Mina. When this became known, the death of Chapinan, which had previously been ascribed to cholera morbus, excited suspicion and inquiry. His body was disinterred on the 21st of September. The face was livid and putrid, but the odour of the corpse was not offensive. The abdomen was of a pale white colour, and Dr. Hopkinson, on cutting into it, was struck with its firmness and resistance. When the stomach was opened, a very peculiar smell arose, which he compares to pickled herring. This is confirmed by several other medical witnesses.* Externally, the stomach was of a dark colour, internally, its whole surface was covered with a dark brownish coloured mucus, and when this was removed, it presented appearances of general inflammation in every part. The intestines were totally empty, of a pale colour, and apparently rather disposed to dry than to putrefy. The rectum was not examined: The œsophagus at its lower part was highly inflamed.

The stomach and its contents were taken to Dr. J. K. Mitchell of Philadelphia for examination. No gritty particles could be discovered adhering to its coats. The process decided upon was to remove the viscid mucus, with which the walls of the stomach were lined, and subject that to one mode

* Dr. Mitchell subsequently obtained a stomach and put into it a small quantity of Fowler's solution, (arsenite of potash.) It remained in his laboratory some two or three months, and then had, as he thinks, precisely the same smell.

of analysis, and then the solid stomach and intestines to another.

Distilled water was added to the mucus and the whole boiled in a Florence flask, for a considerable time. The fluid was then thrown on a filter. The matter left on it, (a dark brown substance,) with the filter itself was thrown into nitric acid, in which the stomach and duodenum were undergoing solution. The filtered liquor was transparent and of a faint amber yellow colour. Portions of it were subjected to the liquid tests. The copper one gave an *undecided grass green*—nitrate of silver, a brownish yellow flocculent precipitate, which grew darker and soon lost its yellowness—sulphuretted hydrogen gas deepened the yellow tint of the solution just perceptibly. The whole of the liquid was then subjected to the last test; thrown into a capsule, heated until it became distinctly yellow and its transparency was gone. The whole was then left on a filter for several hours. When again examined, a transparent liquid was seen below the filter, and on it, a yellow substance which could not be separated from it, being in too small a quantity and the paper not being smooth. From the quantity being so minute, no hope was entertained of obtaining any marked result, and the whole (filter and all) was thrown in the vessel in which the stomach was dissolved. This solution was evaporated to dryness, heated again with nitric acid, and evaporated, until it was supposed that the animal matter was destroyed. Water was added to the residue and heat to boiling again applied. To the product obtained by filtration and evaporation, lime water was added, and this again evaporated. A portion of this was mixed with charcoal, placed in a glass tube and subjected to the heat of a spirit lamp. The tube became covered at some distance from the material with a black and glistening substance, but at this instant the tube cracked from the action of heat. Mr. Clemson, a highly educated chemist, instantly detected the odour of arsenic. The other portions were treated in a similar manner, but nothing beyond the black matter just described could be obtained. "There was no evidence to the eye," says Dr. Mitchell, "that there was any arsenic there."

For the defence, the insufficiency of the testimony, as to symptoms, morbid appearances and chemical proofs, was greatly dwelt upon. The medical witnesses mentioned the sources of fallacy in each. One of them stated, that from the best of his impressions, "from the symptoms, post mortem examination, and chemical tests, William Chapman did not die of arsenic."

Mina was convicted, and Mrs. Chapman found not guilty.*

* Trials of Lucretia Chapman and Lino A. E. Y. Mina, for the murder of William Chapman; prepared for publication by William E. Du Bois, student at law. 8vo. Philadelphia, 1832.

I may also refer to the following cases, which my limits do not permit me to analyze.

Case of Nairn and Ogilvie, for poisoning the husband of one, and the brother of the other — tried at Edinburgh in 1765. The symptoms resembled those from taking arsenic, but the body was not examined, in consequence of the advanced state of putrefaction. The accused were convicted. (Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 10. p. 479.)

Case of Miss Burns. I have noticed this in the previous volume, (p. 219,) as to the proofs of pregnancy. Mr. Angus was also indicted for poisoning her. The symptoms were equivocal, but suspicious; and on dissection, a perforation of the coats of the stomach was found. Around this opening, the parts were extremely soft, pulpy and tender; but there were no traces of inflammation. No poison could be detected in the fluids. With our increased knowledge on the subject of diseases of the stomach, it becomes at least possible that the morbid appearance in question may have been the result of ordinary illness. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 220. Rutter's Vindication.)

Trial of John Lovie, for poisoning a female. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 415. Syme's Justiciary Reports, Appendix, p. 24.)

Case of Eliza Fenning. This is remarkable for the evidence derived from symptoms — a whole family having been taken ill shortly after eating the poisoned dumplings; for the imperfect chemical examination and testimony; and for the conviction of, as I suppose, an innocent person. See Dr. Watkins's pamphlet on this case, London, 1815; Marshall's Remarks on Arsenic, London, 1817; Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence, p. 207, and Hints on the Examination of Medical Witnesses, p. 136.

Trial of Mary Higgins and Edward Clarke, for the murder of the uncle of the former — related by Prof. Amos. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 9, p. 896.)

Trial of the Widow Boursier and Nicholas Kostolo, for poisoning Boursier. Notwithstanding the positive discovery of arsenic in the stomach of the deceased a month after burial, the female was acquitted. (Causes Célèbres du XIX. Siècle, vol. 3, p. 105. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 21, p. 238.)

Case of the Widow Laurent, accused of poisoning her husband. (Anderson's Journal, vol. 2, p. 306. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 7, p. 289.)

A case by Ristelhueber, p. 161.

A case quoted in the Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 2, p. 103, from Rust's Magazine. Here the chemical examiners being dissatisfied with the equivocal results obtained from testing the fluid contents of the stomach, took that viscous and boiled it down. The liquid procured, after removing organic mixtures, yielded metallic arsenic.

In this country—

Case of Kesler, tried in this State in 1817, for the murder of his wife. I omit this, not because I have changed my opinion concerning it, or entertain any doubts that he poisoned her, but because its notice would occupy too disproportionate a space. As to the defects in the medical testimony, they at least have been sufficiently arraigned.

Discovery of arsenic seven years after death. The following case is highly interesting, from proving the possibility of the

Case of Williams, convicted of the murder of his wife in November 1830, in Pennsylvania. She died five hours after taking a white powder, represented by him to be magnesia. Thirst, burning at the stomach, sickness and bloody vomiting were present. She was disinterred twenty-four hours after burial. The inner coat of the stomach was extensively inflamed, and white particles were found adhering to it, particularly at that part where the inflammation was greatest. The contents of the stomach were tested with the silver and copper tests, but neither of them presented the appearances indicative of arsenic. The remaining contents were then evaporated, covered with nitric acid, and again evaporated. The residuum was mingled with charcoal, placed in a glass tube, and sublimed: metallic arsenic was readily obtained. The prisoner was convicted. The case is communicated by Dr. Worthington, North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 11, p. 229.

Case of B. Becker, for murdering his wife in Montgomery county (New-York,) in 1814. Here arsenic was found in the coats of the stomach, and its presence proved by the liquid tests, the copper plates, and the garlic smell. Before execution, he confessed his guilt.

Case of A. Hitchcock, for poisoning his wife. He was tried in Madison county in this State, in 1807. The mucous coat of the stomach was denuded in several places. Here also particles were obtained from the stomach, and the usual tests applied. "Some of the powder was put on a copper plate, suspended over a lamp, and above this another copper plate was held. In a short time the white fumes ascended, and hung on the upper plate in the form of white arsenic." One of the medical witnesses for the prisoner urged in his favour, that no sphacelation was discovered. We now know that this is very uncommon. This prisoner was also convicted, and confessed his guilt.

Case of Medad McKay, tried twice in Allegany county (N. Y.) 1820 and 1821, for poisoning his wife. The prisoner escaped, through the imperfection of the chemical examination. This trial has been reported and published by Mr. Gould, Albany, 1821.

Case of Sager, tried in the State of Maine, October 1834, for poisoning his wife. Here extreme distress was *immediately* experienced after taking the poison. It was added to wine in which an egg had been stirred. Nausea, retching and vomiting succeeded, with violent spasms, great distress at the stomach, feeble pulse and cold sweats. The vomiting was stained with blood towards the last. She preserved her reason till near her death, which happened in a few hours. On dissection, livid patches were found in the stomach, as if blood was collected between the coats; the remainder of that viscus, and the intestines, were of a high florid colour. In some tea and milk which had been prepared for breakfast, arsenic in large quantities was discovered by the three liquid tests, and by reduction. The silver and copper tests would not act on the contents of the stomach, or the matter vomited; but Professor Cleaveland, who was the principal chemical witness, found sulphuretted hydrogen to produce its usual result on them. The counsel for the prisoner, in his able defence, urged that there was no swelling of the body, no paralysis, no drowsiness, no trembling of the limbs, and no loss of reason present in this case. If the distinctions under the head of symptoms be adverted to, a ready explanation may be given for their absence. The prisoner was convicted.

The following may be added, as worthy of a careful perusal:

Analysis of soup containing arsenic, from which a female died at Baltimore, by Dr. Rogers, and Messrs. Andrews and Fisher. After being filtered and evaporated to dryness, it was sublimed with black flux, and gave metallic arsenic. The round of liquid tests was then applied, with corresponding results. It was also reduced with boracic acid and charcoal, as advised by Rose, and a ring of specular metallic crystals was produced. A galvanic circle, as proposed by Fischer, was tried, and the copper rod was found coated with a silvery white deposit. No indications of arsenic could, however, be obtained from boiling the coats of the stomach. (Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6, p. 94.)

discovery of arsenic many years after death. An individual who died in 1822 was disinterred in 1829, at Bourg, in France. The body was entire; the head, trunk and shoulders had preserved their form and position, but the internal organs of the chest and abdomen were destroyed, and there only remained a mass of soft brownish matter, which was deposited along the sides of the spine. Messrs. Ozanam and Idt were under these circumstances appointed to examine the case.

A part of this matter was boiled in repeated portions of distilled water, till the water ceased to carry away with it any impregnation. The solutions thus obtained were subjected to two series of tests. 1. One portion was evaporated to dryness and the extract redissolved. This solution was repeatedly evaporated, and then deflagrated with nitre. The saline residue being dissolved, filtered, and boiled with nitric acid, and saturated with pure potash, was now operated on with the tests of arsenic. Hydrosulphate of ammonia and the silver test gave their precipitates, and a portion of this last was sublimed by heat in a tube. On passing a stream of oxygen over these crystals, and dissolving them in distilled water, the usual tests of white arsenic were found to apply. 2. Another portion was treated with sulphuretted hydrogen and a little muriatic acid, and the precipitate was reduced in a tube with charcoal and potash. A brilliant encrustation was procured, which, when treated as in the former instance, became a solution of oxide of arsenic.*

There is one question that remains for consideration, and I have delayed its notice until now, that the reader may consider it in connexion with the cases that have been given. It is, *whether we are authorized in declaring a person to be poisoned with arsenic from the symptoms merely?* In the previous edition, I considered this at some length, and inclined to the

Analysis of bread in which arsenic had been placed by mistake, and which caused the death of two persons in Maryland, by Messrs. Tyson and Fisher. It was treated with nitric acid in excess, and a few drops of muriatic acid, and evaporated, in order to drive off organic matters. The residuum was treated with boiling water, and filtered. It gave indications of arsenic, with lime water, the copper test, and sulphuretted hydrogen. The sulphuret was then reduced in glass tubes. (Ibid. vol. 7, p. 107.)

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 453; Orfila's Exhumations Juridiques, vol. 2, p. 330. See also page 290 of this volume.

affirmative, and I am happy to say that so distinguished a medical jurist as Dr. Christison has advanced similar sentiments.

There is in most of the cases of poisoning by arsenic, if they be at all protracted, so remarkable a union of symptoms, that they can hardly be confounded with natural disease. The marks of irritation extending from the throat to the rectum, the difficulty in swallowing, the pain of the bladder in passing water, the affection of the genitals, the vomiting and bloody diarrhœa, the extreme weakness—all these combined, as they often are, with nervous symptoms, present a combination that is certainly extremely unusual in ordinary practice. In connexion with this, the fact that a person is attacked soon after eating a meal or taking some drink, and particularly so, if a number of individuals be simultaneously affected, offers additional weight to the suspicion.

A family residing in the parish of Keig, in Scotland, and consisting of two brothers and two sisters, were taken ill on the morning of the 19th August, 1821, shortly after eating breakfast. They were all previously in good health, and the dish of which they ate was porridge, consisting of milk, salt and meal. William Mitchell, one of the brothers, partook largely, but James, who perceived a sickening taste, took less than common, while the sisters had their usual quantity. They were all seized with vomiting, burning heat in the stomach, weakness and fainting, which continued for a considerable length of time, and William finally sunk after seven days. The others gradually recovered, but great debility remained for some months. On dissection, the stomach and intestines presented unequivocal marks of inflammation.*

No part of the salt and milk used that morning was to be found, but the remainder of the meal, and also the contents of William Mitchell's stomach and duodenum, were examined by several physicians and surgeons. No poisonous ingredient, however, could be detected.

In this instance, a family in good health was simultaneously attacked with symptoms that indicated a *common cause*, and there was no epidemic prevalent that would account for them.

* Cases of poisoning by Mr. Murray, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 18, p. 167.

So violent, too, did the cause in question prove, that the individual who had partaken most largely sunk under its effects. Under these circumstances, the brother-in-law of the deceased was tried, and the medical witnesses did not hesitate to give it as their opinion, that poison had been administered to his relatives. He afterwards confessed his guilt, and stated that he had perpetrated the crime by means of arsenic put among the salt, on the morning when the Mitchells were taken ill.

It is not probable that this question will arise so frequently as it has formerly. The improved modes of detection, searching for the poison in the tissues of the stomach, will undoubtedly diminish the number of cases in which, notwithstanding the positive nature of other testimony, no poison could be detected by the best chemists. If a medical witness ever finds it necessary to give such an opinion, it should be founded on a strong combination of circumstances, a marked peculiarity of symptoms, and a striking disorganization of parts.*

TREATMENT. It will not comport with the object of this work to enlarge much on the present topic, but it is, notwithstanding, proper briefly to notice the most approved mode of obviating the effects of the poison.

As to **ANTIDOTES**, the *sulphuret of potash* once had a high reputation, but we have already shown that this is itself a poison. Renault tested its efficacy on animals, and found that they died even sooner when this pretended antidote was administered, than when they had taken the arsenious acid solely.† *Sulphuretted hydrogen* was rather more successful, but only when the poison was taken in a fluid, and not in a solid form. *Sulphur* has been suggested, on the principle of its uniting with the arsenic, but even this has little effect. *Charcoal* has been recommended, in consequence of the experiments of Bertrand, and it would seem to have attained a partial celebrity. The results obtained by Orfila are, however,

* For Dr. Christison's views, see *Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 2, p. 308. *Toxicology*, 2nd edition, p. 295. It is proper to add that most medical jurists deem it unsafe to rely on symptoms alone.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 7, p. 59. Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 1, p. 141.

destructive to its character, and I should consider it very hazardous to depend on this substance.*

Of late, a great deal has been said in favour of the *hydrated oxide of iron*. This substance is prepared by taking a pure solution of the subsulphate of iron, increasing its dose of oxygen by heating it with nitric acid, and then pouring into the solution an excess of caustic ammonia. The hydro-oxide is now obtained by decantation.

Arsenious acid will unite with oxide of iron, and form an insoluble salt, the arsenite of iron, which has little or no effect on the animal economy. In this respect, then, the character required for an antidote is attained. "Every supposed chemical antidote will prove useless which does not render the arsenic insoluble, not only in water, but likewise in the contents and secretions of the stomach."† This has been the objection, as well as the cause of the failure of all that have been previously recommended; for the arsenites, though insoluble in water, are all so soluble in the juices of the stomach as to allow of the introduction of a sufficient quantity of the poison into the blood to prove fatal.

Dr. Bunson and Berthold, two physicians of Gottingen, being aware of the above results, and also that ten or twelve parts of the oxide of iron were sufficient to neutralize a single part of arsenic, proceeded to ascertain the virtue of this substance on animals. A sufficient quantity of arsenic, (to the amount of three grains in solution,) was given to rabbits and dogs, and the hydrated iron immediately thereafter. No inconvenience appeared to follow, but when only enough of the oxide to neutralize half of the arsenic was given, the animal was soon seized with symptoms of poisoning and died. They hence advise that in all cases where the quantity of poison taken is unknown, the antidote should be exhibited in large and repeated doses, and its efficacy may be aided by the addition of a few drops of ammonia.‡

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 500, vol. 2, p. 470. Dr. Chisholm says that the juice of the sugar cane is an antidote, and states that it has been tried on animals in the West Indies with complete success. (Brande's Journal, vol. 10, p. 193; Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 4, p. 416.)

† Christison, p. 320.

‡ Lancet, N. S. vol. 15, p. 126. London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine,

Orfila repeated these experiments on animals with *arsenic acid* and *arsenic*, and generally the results were favourable. If, however, the administration of the antidote was delayed beyond half an hour, all the symptoms of poisoning succeeded, and death was the termination. In addition to these, it is stated that Lassaigne and Bonlay, have each proved the efficacy of the antidote in cases of poisoning with arsenious acid. But they add, that it has no power when arseniate of potash has been given. This indeed could not be expected, since potash has a greater affinity for the arsenious acid than iron.*

On the other hand, Messrs. Brett and Orton, both surgeons in London, have found that the supposed antidote did not preserve life in the animals on which they operated. Mr. Brett gave two grains of arsenious acid to a rabbit, and in three or four minutes thereafter, 8 or 10 grains of the hydrated oxide. It died in less than three hours, but did not appear to suffer pain; and the stomach was not inflamed, although mucus was present on its lining membrane. In Mr. Orton's experiments the vascularity of the stomach was more marked. Mr. Brett also found that the hydrated oxide would not neutralize arsenious acid in solution.†

From these facts, the reader may form an estimate of the value of this substance. There is probably sufficient testimony to warrant its use in cases of poisoning, but I fear that its action will not prove sufficiently powerful.

Aside from this, our indications are, 1. To remove the poison, and 2, To prevent its injurious consequences on the stomach and system generally.

The first is attempted by means of an emetic, as the sulphate of zinc; but if vomiting be present, we may aid it by

vol. 6, 237. There is an inaccuracy somewhere as to the poison used by the German experimenters. In the work last quoted, the *arsenious* acid is mentioned, while in the *Lancet* it is the *arsenic*.

* *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 15, p. 157, 516.

A case is also given by M. Leger, of a child poisoned by a solution of fly powder, to whom the hydrate of the tritoxide of iron was administered with immediate and permanent relief. (*London Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 6, p. 572, 602. *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 16, p. 518.)

† Mr. Brett in *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 15, p. 220. Mr. Orton in *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 15, p. 232.

diluents in small quantities.* Tartrite of Antimony should never be given.

But when vomiting does not take place immediately from the means just directed, the urgency of the case warrants us in using more direct remedies. Renault recommends that the stomach be washed and emptied mechanically, by means of a large tube of elastic gum, and a syringe. In this way, a certain quantity of liquid may be thrown in, to dilute or suspend the poison, and by the action of syringe, the whole may be again withdrawn.† The *stomach pump* has in this way proved a useful assistant in some cases, but it is probably most valuable in instances of poisoning with opium.‡

2. In several instances the free use of magnesia has proved of service. Mr. Joseph Hume was, I believe, the first who administered this article. Copious vomitings had already occurred, and retchings and pain continued. Under these circumstances, he gave carbonate of magnesia very freely with tincture of opium, suspended in water. In five days the patient was well.§

Inflammation of the stomach is not an uncommon secondary consequence in those who survive, and Dr. Yelloly first suggested that it should be treated accordingly. In Dr. Ro-

* In a case related by Mr. Kerr, (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 94,) where a large quantity of solid arsenic had been taken, and vomiting did not occur for an hour afterwards, he continued the exhibition of sulphate of zinc and ipecacuanha, to the amount of 175 grains of the one, and 230 of the other, all in the space of three hours. Copious vomiting ensued and the patient recovered. Mr. Kerr particularly cautions against the too free use of diluents. Strong and complete contractions (he observes,) of the stomach are required to throw off the poison, and these cannot take place, if that viscus be distended with liquids.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 91.

‡ Renault and even Boerhaave, have proposed its use, so that the contest of late years about the priority of its invention, is evidently futile. Dr. Physick of Philadelphia, published a paper in 1812, in which he mentions that he *successfully* applied the syringe to a child poisoned with laudanum, and Dr. Dorsey afterwards cured two individuals by the same treatment. This distinguished surgeon, however, subsequently states that Dr. Alexander Munro, jun. first suggested the invention in 1797, although he (Dr. Physick,) was ignorant of this fact when he applied it practically. I conceive Dr. Physick is entitled to the *honour of having been the first who saved life by its means*. See Eclectic Repository, vol. 3, p. 111 and 381; and American Medical Recorder, vol. 6, p. 294.

§ London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 46, p. 466. Mr. Edwards in *ibid.* vol. 49, p. 117, and Mr. Buchanan in London Medical Repository, vol. 19, p. 288, have published similar cases. In both, however, copious vomitings had already occurred, and in the former, venesection was required to complete the cure.

get's case it succeeded perfectly; and several instances have since occurred, in which venesection, blisters, &c. were used with the happiest results.* Opium, after free depletion, is also useful.

Medical police. It is certainly a duty that legislators owe to their constituents, and sovereigns to their subjects, to restrict the sale of this dangerous article; and I am happy to add, that in several countries, proper regulations exist. In France and Prussia, the sale of arsenic is strictly guarded.† In the State of New-York, the following is now in force: All apothecaries, druggists, or other persons selling arsenic, corrosive sublimate, prussic acid, or any other substance or liquid usually denominated poisonous, shall have a printed or written label, with the word "Poison" on the phial, box, or parcel containing the same; and in case they sell tartar emetic, its name shall be attached in the same manner. The breach of this is declared a misdemeanour, and punishable by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars.‡ But although the danger of accidental poisoning is thus diminished, there is not a sufficient check on its criminal employment. Why should all and every one be allowed to purchase this virulent substance?

The *black oxide of arsenic* deserves attention, since it is the basis of the *fly powder*, which is much used in France and Germany to destroy animals, and hence may often be the cause of accidental poisoning. It is commonly deemed to be a mixture of metallic arsenic and the white oxide. Renault, in his experiments on dogs, found it quickly mortal; and when it had acted sufficiently, it produced in the stomach an exudation of blood, and infiltration of the same between the coats of that viscus, without any trace of erosion.§ Jaeger witnessed the death of a girl, aged sixteen, who was poisoned by drinking water that had stood on it. She made no complaint of pain, and retained her senses to the last, asking for every thing she wanted. Nine hours after death, the skin exhibited no

* McLeod in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 15, p. 553. Davies in *London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 28.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 9, p. 351; vol. 13, p. 143.

‡ *Revised Statutes*, vol. 2, p. 694.

§ *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 7, p. 90.

change, except its paleness and a few blue spots on it. On dissection, a slight spotted redness was found about the cardia; the bottom of the stomach was discoloured, and there was a small brown spot where the villous coat seemed as if superficially burnt.* In several cases quoted by Orfila, the stomach was inflamed, and red spots with extravasated blood were present.†

In a case that occurred to Dr. Wagner, a child drank some from a cup, and death ensued in twelve hours; yet the most careful analysis of the intestinal canal and its contents, did not detect any vestige of it. This is ascribed to the previous vomiting, and the small quantity taken.‡

From the nature of this substance, it is evident that it may be detected by the application of heat. This will sublime the white oxide and form the bright metallic crust. By solution in water also, and the application of tests, the characteristic proofs of the oxide will be exhibited.

Arsenites. Two of these are in use and may become the cause of poisoning; the *arsenite of copper*, (Scheele's green, mineral green;) and the *arsenite of potash*, (Fowler's solution.) The former is used as a paint, and is sold in cakes.§ The latter is employed as a medicine, and sometimes called the tasteless ague drop||. Both of them may be detected by the addition of acetic acid, and then heating the mixture. Sulphuretted hydrogen is then transmitted through it, and in the one case the sulphuret of copper is separated from the sulphuret of arsenic by the addition of ammonia. The reduction of the sulphuret is then to be effected as already directed.

Arsenic acid is to be considered as a more violent and rapid poison than even arsenious acid. This was abundantly prov-

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 80.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 160.

‡ London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 2, p. 488.

§ The mineral green commonly sold in shops, is not an arsenite according to Dr. Christison. By analysis, he ascertained it to be a mixture of the hydrate of copper and carbonate of lime; p. 258.

|| When given in too large doses as a remedy, disastrous consequences may follow. Dr. Astbury (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 15, p. 415,) relates a case of this description. Vomiting is an early symptom.

ed by the experiments of Brodie, Jaeger and Campbell. Its action is, however, similar.

There are two cases on record, according to Dr. Christison, of poisoning with *arsenate of potash*. This substance is very soluble in water, and is reduced to the metallic state with charcoal in a tube, on the application, however, of a higher heat than is required for arsenious acid. When in solution, nitrate of silver throws down a *brick red* precipitate, sulphate of copper, a pale blush white one, while sulphuretted hydrogen, preceded by acidulation with muriatic acid, and transmitted for some time, gives the yellow sulphuret. It will at first, according to Orfila, produce only a whitish and slightly yellow precipitate.

Sulphurets of arsenic. The native sulphurets (Orpiment and Realgar,) were administered by Hoffman and Renault, to dogs and other animals, without occasioning the slightest derangement. Smith and Orfila have, however, found them poisonous. The latter applied these substances to the cellular tissue of dogs, and also introduced them into the stomach; and in each case, when doses from 50 to 120 grains were used, the animals died in between 40 and 60 hours. On dissection, marks of inflammation and ulceration were seen on the mucous membrane of the stomach, and the interior of the ventricles of the heart presented several red spots.*

Artificial orpiment is, however, more actively poisonous, and for the reason that it is a mixture of sulphuret of arsenic and arsenious acid.† The paint called *king's yellow* is also decidedly noxious. This is an impure sulphuret, consisting, according to an analysis of Dr. Christison, of the sulphuret, caustic lime and free sulphur.‡

Although the native sulphurets are evidently less poisonous than the artificial, yet Decourdemanche has indicated another cause why the former are also more active under certain circumstances. When boiled with water, it decomposes them, sulphuretted hydrogen is evolved and the white oxide of arsenic remains in solution. This change will even take place in

* Lancet, vol. 10, p. 276, from the Journal De Chimie, 1826.

† Guibourt, Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, vol. 1, p. 319.

‡ Christison, p. 262.

the cold, though more slowly; and it is much accelerated by the presence of animal or vegetable principles in the water.*

There are some interesting cases of poisoning with the sulphuret, which may be here stated.

A lady aged sixty, and named Mrs. Smith, the owner of some property, went to lodge with Mrs. Burdock in Bristol, (England.) She shortly became unwell, from a cold, and some gruel was given to her by her landlady. In half an hour she was taken very ill, vomiting, purging and violent pain ensued, and she spat thick blood in the pot. No medical assistance was summoned, and she died in about an hour, and was privately interred.

Her relations who had not been apprised of her decease, presently became aware of it. Suspicions were excited, and at the end of fourteen months after her burial, in December, 1834, a warrant was issued for the disinterment and examination of the body. There was some water in the coffin, but the dress was tolerably firm. The face of the corpse was shrunk, and of a dingy yellow colour; the nose depressed and the orbits sunk. The abdomen was considerably flattened, but the thorax maintained its usual convexity. The integuments of these were found converted into adipocire. On opening the abdomen, the alimentary canal was found in a remarkable state of preservation. The intestines contained neither fluid nor gas; and some of its convolutions were matted together. The diaphragm was firm; the lungs and heart shrunk in size, of a dark blue colour; and the latter contained some dark coloured fluid, which was evidently decomposed blood.

On separating the duodenum from the small intestines, its mucous membrane was observed to be covered with a large quantity of a viscid yellow substance. This was carefully removed. The mucous membrane of the mouth and gullet was decomposed; the stomach and intestines, however, were firm, and appeared as little affected as "if the person had been dead only a few days, in cold weather." Their lining membrane was smeared with a large quantity of an unctuous yel

* *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 28, p. 228.

low substance, which was readily scraped off, and it was seen to be more firm in the parts where the yellow matter was in contact. The large intestines bore the marks of inflammation, being more or less red in various points. The soft parts of the brain were decomposed.

Mr. Herepath, lecturer on chemistry at the Bristol medical school, took a portion of the matter found in the stomach, applied heat to drive off moisture, and then mixed it with a little carbonate of soda and charcoal, and introduced the whole into a glass tube. On applying heat, metallic arsenic was condensed. The part of the tube that contained the metallic crust was then cut off, heat was freely applied, and it being now in contact with the atmosphere, arsenious acid was produced. A portion of this was now dissolved in a small quantity of water, and the solution divided into three parts. To these, the ammoniated nitrate of silver, the ammoniated sulphate of copper and sulphuretted hydrogen, were respectively added, and they each gave their characteristic results.

It is probable that nearly a drachm of the sulphuret was present in the alimentary canal of the deceased. When we recollect that some was evacuated by vomiting, and also that the accused had given some to Mrs. Smith on the day previous to her death, certainly a sufficient quantity to produce the result was accounted for.

This anatomical and chemical examination, (and which cannot be too highly commended, and confers the highest credit on Mr. Herepath and Drs. Riley and Symonds,) led to the apprehension, trial, conviction and execution of Mrs. Burdock. It appears that she endeavored to purchase arsenic of a druggist, but not having any on hand, she obtained the sulphuret from him.*

On the 30th of June, 1829, Dr. Lepelletier was directed to disinter and examine the bodies of M. Fortier and his daughter, the former nine and the latter three months after interment, from a suspicion that they had been poisoned.

* London Medical Gazette, vol. 15, p. 516; vol. 16, p. 87, 121, 231.

Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 26, p. 463.

London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 4, p. 390.

London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 760.

The body of the daughter aged forty years, was in a state of complete putrefaction, except that the abdominal viscera were scarcely affected by it. The peritoneum was sound, and the mucous membrane of the digestive canal from the œsophagus to the rectum, was untouched by decay; but it was covered with bright red spots, and in these, a yellow matter was found. The œsophagus contained about two spoonsful of a dark fluid, similar to venous blood, and also some of the same yellow substance, while in the stomach was a yellow liquid. In several places, false membranes were found and readily detached from the lining coat.

In the body of the father, although putrefaction was still farther advanced, yet the abdominal viscera were also sound and the same marks of inflammation were seen, while several ounces of a thick yellowish fluid were found.

In both these instances, a few experiments served to show that the yellow substance was sulphuret of arsenic.*

Dr. Christison advises, that when sulphuret of arsenic is contained in organic mixtures, it may be removed by adding caustic ammonia. This dissolves it, and the solution on being acidulated with muriatic acid, will deposit the sulphuret sufficiently pure for undergoing the process of reduction.

Arseniuretted hydrogen gas. This substance has proved fatal to a distinguished chemist, the late Mr. Gehlen, of Munich. He was distilling a mixture of arsenic in powder and caustic potash, in order to observe the action of the latter on the former. Finding that the combination was taking place very slowly, he applied his nostrils several times to the flask which contained the mixture, in order to ascertain by the odour the state of the mixture. About an hour afterwards, he was seized with uninterrupted vomiting, rigor, and excessive prostration of strength; these symptoms continued for nine days, when he died, although every effort was made for his relief.†

It has been suggested that this gas, on being inspired, is de-

* Orfila, *Exhumations Juridiques*, vol. 2, p. 317. Suspected cases of poisoning by sulphuret of arsenic, but in which none could be found, are given in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 2, p. 405; vol. 3, p. 381.

† Male, p. 176.

composed in the lungs, the hydrogen uniting with the carbonic acid, while the arsenic is deposited in the bronchiæ.*

Arsenic, in its metallic state, oxidizes so readily, that it would be extremely hazardous to pronounce it innoxious. Renault has, however, given two drachms of mispickel (an alloy of arsenic and iron,) to animals, without any injurious effects. This fact gives us the assurance that the arsenic which is sometimes contained in tin, need not to be feared, as it is in the metallic state.†

MERCURY.

The most important compound of this metal, in its relation to legal medicine, is

CORROSIVE SUBLIMATE. Like arsenic, this substance is poisonous, whether internally or externally applied, but a larger quantity is required to produce deleterious effects.

Internally, (a.) Its exhibition by the mouth. If corrosive sublimate be exhibited in considerable doses, and especially if its use is too long continued, it causes colic and vomiting. These are succeeded by affections of the salivary glands, ptyalism, swelling of the tongue and gums, destruction of the teeth, and swelling of the face and head. Cardialgia, diarrhœa, dysentery, phthisis pulmonalis, tremors of the limbs, paralysis, or even death, have been the consequence of persisting in such a course for an improper space of time.‡

* London Medical Repository, vol. 4, p. 321. Brande's Journal, vol. 2, p. 206.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 90. There are two curious cases, which it may be somewhat difficult to arrange, but which I may mention in a note. One occurred in France, and its history was communicated to the Academy of Medicine. A manufacturer of the blue pigment used in painting china, was engaged with his servant in boiling a mixture of nitric acid, cobalt and arsenic. On a sudden, the mattress burst, and the room was filled with the fumes. The servant escaped, but the master was knocked down and lay insensible for some time. He died after eight days' intense suffering, his body having become enormously swollen. The servant was attacked with similar swelling of the abdomen, but was relieved by purgatives and the warm bath. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 23, p. 504.) The other is mentioned by Dr. Elliotson. A whole family were seized with nausea and vomiting, and all had watery eyes. Their pulses were rapid, and indeed there was a general inflammatory state of the system in all. As none of the neighbours were similarly affected, he suspected from the symptoms that arsenic might be the cause, and on inquiry, found that the persons who had previously occupied the premises were mixers of colours, and had deposited, before leaving, in the kitchen and garden, large quantities of arsenite of copper. The situation of the house was damp, and it was the opinion of a chemist that the contact of water decomposed the arsenite and produced arseniuretted hydrogen. (Lancet, N. S., vol. 10, p. 133.)

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 47.

Dreadful as this catalogue of ills may appear, it is usually aggravated when we are called to view a patient *poisoned* by this mineral. The dose is then larger, and the effects are more immediate. We may state the *ordinary* symptoms in such cases to be the following: "An acrid, astringent, metallic taste in the mouth; a sensation of stricture and burning heat in the throat; anxiety, and rending pains in the stomach, and in the whole of the intestinal canal; nausea; frequent vomiting of a fluid, which is sometimes bloody, and accompanied with violent efforts; diarrhœa, sometimes dysentery; pulse small, tight and frequent; faintness, general debility, difficulty of breathing, cold sweats, cramps in all the limbs, general insensibility, convulsions and death."*

As discriminative of the effects of this substance from those of arsenic, Dr. Christison observes, that its symptoms begin much sooner; the irritation in the throat and stomach sometimes, indeed, commencing during the very act of swallowing, or the first five minutes; that its taste is more unequivocal and strong; that the sense of acidity along the throat and in the stomach is much more severe, and that the countenance is usually flushed and swollen.

In addition to these, it has been noticed by some observers, that there is a great diminution in the secretion of urine. Dr. Henry, of Manchester, in a case where death followed in four days, remarked that no urine was voided after the third day, and on introducing the catheter, the bladder was found empty.† In the cases related by Mr. Valentine, where a mother poisoned herself and four children, the same observation was made. One child died in twelve hours after taking the poison, and during this period, no urine was secreted; another in twenty-four hours, and voided a very small quantity. The third died in thirty-one hours and secreted none, while the mother, who lived seventy hours, only passed a very little.‡

It must also be remarked, that the pain and stricture in the pharynx and œsophagus, are sometimes so severe as to cause

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 60.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 151.

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 14, p. 463. The only one (a child) that recovered, in consequence of having taken a small quantity, voided no urine in three days. Dr. Christison, p. 359, adduces several parallel instances.

the greatest distress in swallowing even the mildest fluids, and in one instance, they were so excessive as for some hours to destroy the power of speech.* Bloody vomiting is not uncommon, and coagulable lymph has been found in the matter purged, mixed with clots of blood.† In fatal cases, the pain at the scrobiculus cordis continues without intermission, and in those who recover, it is among the last symptoms that disappear. In Dr. Henry's patient, a complete paralysis of the upper and lower extremities occurred a few hours before death.

According to Dr. Christison, the ordinary duration of fatal cases is from twenty-four to thirty-six hours. There are but a few, where life has been prolonged beyond this. The most protracted, with the ordinary symptoms of irritation, is that related by Dr. Venables. A female took this poison to procure abortion. She was seized with vomiting and purging, tenesmus, a muco-sanguineous discharge from the bowels, and total suppression of urine, while blood was contained in the matter vomited. Still there was no fætor or salivation. She died on the eighth day.‡

* Case by Mr. Anderson, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 14, p. 474. On the contrary, a case is related by Mr. Saunders, where the patient lived nine days, and during that period experienced little pain, and only felt some soreness after the sixth day. Hiccup was present during part of his illness. (*London Medical Repository*, vol. 2, p. 458.)

† Valentine *ut antea*. In two of these cases, coma and insensibility of the pupils were present for some time before death.

‡ *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 3, p. 616. I have noticed the following cases in addition to those already quoted.

Houlston on poisons, p. 81. An adult took six drachms in solution; recovered.

Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 2, p. 180. Case by Dr. Budd. A female took an ounce; she had the usual severe symptoms, but recovered.

American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 6, p. 540. Case by Dr. Hort. Recovered.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 15, p. 510. Case by Mr. Thomas. Recovered.

Ibid. Case by Mr. Blacklock. A man aged fifty, took a drachm dissolved in three gills of water, through mistake. His symptoms were not peculiar. There were present bloody vomiting and purging, succeeded by bilious vomiting and purging, and during the whole of his illness he suffered under violent and incessant hiccup. The urine was suppressed, and there was a numbness of the arms and legs. He died on the seventh day. (Vol. 36, p. 92.)

Ibid. vol. 43, p. 253. Case by Ollivier and Barruel, of three children, poisoned through carelessness at Paris. The oldest, aged seven, took eighteen grains, and died in three hours; the youngest, about two years old, took six grains, and died in eleven hours. The mistake was discovered in two hours, and antidotes were given, but the youngest would not take them. The second, aged three and a half years, took twelve grains. It apparently recovered from the immediate effects, but in a few

To this variety of poisoning Dr. Christison adds a second, which begins like the former, with irritation of the alimentary canal, but the symptoms of mercurial erythysm (inflammation of the salivary glands and parts adjoining) supervene. These usually occur on the second day, and the fatal termination is generally delayed beyond the period mentioned above.

Even besides these, there are many other instances in which the patient escapes the immediate danger, but is still liable to the chronic effects of the metal, such as salivation and its accompanying consequences. The constitution often breaks down after a time, under their severity.

(b.) *By injection into the anus.* We have reason to believe, from the result of experiments on animals, that the effects of the poison administered in this way would be similar to the former. The only case on record, that I have noticed, is a complex one, from the extraordinary combination of poisons given to destroy life. As, however, the corrosive sublimate appears to have been the immediate agent of death, I shall mention it in this place.

Sir Thomas Overbury was poisoned in the year 1613, in the Tower of London, at the instigation of the Earl and Countess of Somerset. The agents were punished, but the principals escaped. From the confession of Franklin the apothecary, it appears that the Countess wished to procure the strongest possible poisons for Sir Thomas. He accordingly bought seven—*aqua fortis*, *white arsenic*, *mercury*, *powder of diamonds*, *lapis costitis*, *great spiders*, and *cantharides*. All these were given at different times. Sir Thomas never eat white salt, but there was arsenic put into it; and Mrs. Turner, when two partridges were sent to him, and water and onions were the sauce, put in cantharides instead of pepper. Indeed, said Franklin, he seldom ate any thing in which there was not poison. Richard Weston, while acting as keeper to Overbury, procured a poison of a green and yellow colour (*rosalgar*,) and

days diarrhoea and other symptoms of gastro-enteritis came on, and death followed on the 23d day.

The same cases are given in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 26, p. 515.

Many other instances under the different varieties, are cited by Christison and Orfila.

mixed it with his broth. He procured white arsenic and mixed it with the food; and in addition, mingled some corrosive sublimate in tarts and jellies. *The sublimate was also dissolved in a chyster, and administered to the prisoner.* This produced, according to the confession of Weston, sixty stools, together with vomiting. Sir Thomas died the next day.*

EXTERNALLY. *Applied to a wound or ulcer, or to the skin.* Orfila quotes several cases, illustrating the dangerous, and indeed fatal effects of this mode of application. I shall only cite one, from Pibrac. "A strong robust woman, aged forty-nine years, of a good temperament, having an ulcerated cancer of the breast, was entrusted to the care of an empiric, who employed upon her his white powder externally applied; it was corrosive sublimate. The patient was in great pain after the application; the pains of the cancer greatly increased, and in the space of a few hours became intolerable. A crowd of accidents occurred at once; oppression, nausea, vomitings, which extended even to blood, and convulsive motions the most violent. In fine, she suffered in every part of her body a dreadful torture, from which she was not delivered till the next morning by a horrible death."†

A solution of corrosive sublimate in alcohol, applied to the skin, has produced, within a few hours, violent pains of the stomach, accompanied with sickness, vomiting and diarrhœa. The debility that follows is of the most alarming kind. In one instance, the stools consisted of blood and mucus; and it is evident that if the use of this noxious substance had been continued, fatal consequences would have ensued. Salivation seems to be a constant effect from this mode of application.‡

* Hargrave's State Trials, vol. 1, p. 323, 345.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 59.

‡ Cases of this nature are related by Dr. Anderson (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 437,) and Mr. Robertson (ditto, vol. 8, p. 195;) and by Dr. Cloquet of himself, communicated to Orfila (vol. 2, p. 462.) In this latter, vomiting, gripings and tenesmus were induced, barely from plunging his hands several times in a concentrated solution, for the purpose of taking out some anatomical preparations, and neglecting afterwards to wash them.

Two dreadful cases of suffering and death, by Mr. Ward (London Medical Gazette, vol. 3, p. 666,) in brothers, who each rubbed in an ounce of corrosive sublimate mixed with hog's lard, on the lower part of the abdomen. Sensations of roasting alive followed in each, and one went and laid himself in a stream of water for relief. Nausea, pain, constriction about the fauces, suppression of urine, discharges of blood from the

Appearances on dissection. In the case of Dr. Henry, already quoted, the external appearance of the stomach and intestines was perfectly natural. About two ounces of a thick yellowish ropy fluid were found in the stomach, which was but moderately distended with air. On its inner surface, numerous dark red spots, indicating inflammation of the villous coat, were observable; they extended through the whole length of the smaller curvature, and occupied the greater part of the fundus, but did not appear in the lower portion of the large curvature. No abrasion of the villous coat was perceptible. The inner coat of the duodenum, as far as the middle of its length, presented the same appearance of inflammation. The lower part of the œsophagus, for about three inches above the cardia, was slightly inflamed; but higher up, it was of a natural colour. The heart, lungs, liver and spleen were sound. The gall-bladder was emptier than usual. The left kidney was of a looser texture than natural, and a small abscess was discovered in it, filled with pus. *The bladder was empty, and exceedingly contracted.*

In each of the four cases of Mr. Valentine, he found the stomach greatly diseased. Black circular patches, about three inches in diameter, were observed, and from them an extensive inflammation of the inner coat diverged in all directions. "In the child which died first, the texture was totally destroyed through all the coats, as far as the circular patch extended; and on washing off the destroyed parts, only the peritoneal covering of that part of the organ was left. It cannot be better compared," he observes, "that to a piece of leather *burnt with a red hot coal.*" The intestines were highly inflamed. The gall-bladder, in every case, was greatly distended with bile; the peritoneum generally inflamed, as were also the mesentery and omentum. In one instance, the kidneys were inflamed. *In all, the urinary bladder was much contracted; in the mother, it was of the size of a walnut. and in one of the children, no larger than a marble.*

stomach, and ptalism followed. Both died; and in the one who survived longest, mortification occurred previous to death.

Another fatal case is mentioned by Dr. Kimball, in *Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences*, vol. 4, p. 463.

The mouth, throat, and gullet are also frequently inflamed.* A singular appearance sometimes observed in the former, is shrivelling of the tongue, with great enlargement of the papillæ at its root.†

The destruction of the coats of the stomach and intestines, and more particularly the colon and rectum, which is so commonly seen in fatal cases, originates, according to Dr. Christison, from two causes, corrosion and ulceration. The former is described in Mr. Valentine's cases, and also in Dr. Venables'. In this last, there was a patch on the under surface of the stomach, as large as two crown pieces, and of a very dark olive colour, besides general erosion of the villous coat. If life is prolonged, the disorganized matter sloughs off, leaving an ulcerated cavity. Ulceration is either a consequence of inflammation, which of course is an almost constant morbid appearance, or it results from corrosion. Often large, black, gangrenous ulcers are seen, both in the stomach and the lower intestines; the small ones, I believe, generally escape. Inflammation of the peritoneum and kidneys frequently occurs. Orfila has found that the internal membrane of the heart is sometimes inflamed, and checkered with black spots. In both of Ollivier's cases, the same was seen. There were ecchymosed patches on the internal surface of the left ventricle, beneath its inner membrane, and which was pale and whitish.

I have already, in a previous chapter, noticed the effects of the introduction of corrosive sublimate into the dead body. On the rectum, its chemical effects alone were visible, and no marks of vital reaction appeared.‡

Effect on animals. Mr. Brodie injected into the stomach of a rabbit, by means of an elastic gum tube, six grains of corrosive sublimate, dissolved in six drachms of distilled water. No immediate symptoms followed the injection; the animal made no expression of pain, but in three minutes he became insensible, was convulsed, and in four minutes and a half from the time of the injection being made, he died. On opening the thorax, the heart was found to have entirely ceased acting,

* In one of Ollivier's cases, (the oldest,) the mucous membrane of the œsophagus was easily detached in curling shreds.

† Christison, p. 387.

‡ Orfila. See vol. 2, p. 269 of this work.

and the blood in the cavities of the left side was of a scarlet colour. The stomach was much distended; the pyloric and cardiac portions were separated from each other by a strong muscular contraction, which appeared to have prevented the passage of the fluid from the upper to the lower part, since the contents of the pyloric portion were firm and solid, and in every respect resembled the usual contents of the stomach, while those of the cardiac portion consisted of the food of the animal much diluted with fluid. In the pyloric portion, also, the mucous membrane had its natural appearance; but in the cardiac portion, it was of a dark grey colour, readily torn and peeled off, and in some parts its texture was completely destroyed, so that it appeared like a pulp, on removing which, the muscular and peritoneal parts were exposed.

A similar experiment, with a scruple of corrosive sublimate, on a cat, produced death in twenty-five minutes; and on dissection, the texture of the stomach was found destroyed as in the preceding case; the mucous coat tore and separated from the muscular with great facility, and the upper part of the duodenum was similarly altered, although not in so marked a manner.

The same experiments were now performed on a dead rabbit and cat, and *precisely the same appearances were found on dissection*, except that as the middle contraction was wanting, the disorganization was not confined to the cardiac portion.

The conclusion drawn by Mr. Brodie is the following:—“Corrosive sublimate, when taken internally in large quantities, occasions death by acting chemically on the mucous membrane of the stomach, so as to destroy its texture; the organs more immediately necessary to life being affected in consequence of their sympathy with the stomach.”* He also denies the idea of the absorption of the poison in these cases. This, however, is believed by many physiologists, and at all events is far from being a settled question.†

Corrosive sublimate has been considered as nearly innocuous to horses, and has been given in doses of several drachms

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 462.

† See Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 11, p. 126.

without producing any apparent effects. An instance is, however, related by Dr. Reeve, where two ounces produced death in eight hours; and previous to this, there was a copious discharge of urine and fæces. On dissection, no inflammation was observed in the coats of the stomach; the intestines, however, were flabby and tender, and putridity had far advanced in them. The liver and kidneys were in a putrid state.*

In several experiments made by Dr. Bostock and others on dogs, with small doses of this mineral, vomiting and purging, with symptoms of violent pain, ensued; and after some hours, they terminated in death. In one case, on dissection, the peritoneal coat of the stomach was found inflamed, and the vessels of its internal surface were injected so as to present a general redness; but there was a very slight corrugation of the coats, and no erosion. But in another instance, where the dose had been larger, the villous coat was much corrugated and inflamed; and on that part of it which lines the small curvature, there was much blackness, which had the appearance of blood extravasated between the coats. On cutting, however, through the villous coat, there was no extravasation.†

Campbell, Smith, Gaspard and Orfila, have severally ascertained the effects of corrosive sublimate when applied to the cellular tissue, or injected at once into a vein. In the former case, and even when in a solid state, it causes death in three or four days. The symptoms are those of dysentery; and on dissection, inflammation, and sometimes ulceration of the stomach and rectum, are observed. Some of the experimenters also found the lungs and heart inflamed, and this was particularly noticed by Gaspard, who injected the poison at once into the blood. The mucous membrane of the intestines was red; and the lungs, according to the length of time that the animal survived, showed black ecchymosed spots, some inflamed, and others either suppurated or gangrenous.‡

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 254.

† Rutter's Vindication, p. 28.

‡ Christison, p. 350. Dr. Roupell (Illustrations, part 2.) introduced into the stomach of a dog, a drachm of corrosive sublimate, and tied the œsophagus. The animal died in four or five hours, with little outward marks of pain. On dissection, the stomach was highly vascular, and its mucous membrane of a leaden hue. The duodenum had a mixed appearance, partly red, and partly of a lead colour, and its mucous

Tests. There is some difference among chemists, as to the precise solubility of corrosive sublimate. According to Thénard, it is soluble in eleven parts of temperate water, while Orfila says twenty.. It dissolves in thrice its weight of boiling water. These proportions should be remembered, as an unnecessary addition of fluid may thus be avoided.* Corrosive sublimate is soluble in alcohol and ether.

We shall consider its tests in three states—in a solid form; in a state of solution; and when mixed with animal and vegetable fluids and solids.

In the solid state.

(a.) Expose a small quantity of the powder without any admixture, to heat, in a coated tube, corrosive sublimate will be ascertained by its rising to the top of the tube, lining the inner surface in the form of a shining white crust, and from its peculiar crystalline form. This last, if necessary, should be examined with the microscope.

(b.) Add a solution of caustic potash to it, and it will become yellow, the peroxide being disengaged. This yellow colour distinguishes it from calomel, which is also decomposed by the solution of potash, but yields a black protoxide.

(c.) Caustic ammonia produces a permanent white precipitate, while it blackens calomel.

(d.) If corrosive sublimate be let fall in minute fragments into a tube of glass, the bottom of which contains a little pure caustic potash melted by heat, one portion of the salt rises in the form of smoke, to condense itself on the sides of the tube; while another portion sinks down, and takes a red colour. If the heat be continued for five or six minutes, metallic mercury in the form of globules is obtained, adhering to the sides of the tube, and mixed with the corrosive sublimate that is not decomposed. If the quantity be small and difficult of detection, dissolve the remainder of the salt, and the globules will be precipitated.

membrane was thickened. All the small intestines were inflamed, and a thick white mucus thrown upon their internal coat.

* Dr. John Davy, in a paper read before the Royal Society, June 6, 1832, entitled "Some Observations on Corrosive Sublimate," states that he found it soluble in water at 57° of Fahr. in the proportion of 5.4 per cent. Alcohol at 60° dissolved half its weight, and ether about one-third its weight. (Philosophical Transactions. Abstract of the Papers read from 1800 to 1830, vol. 2, p. 173.)

(e.) When corrosive sublimate is left for some time in a solution of protochloride (muriate) of tin, it becomes grayish black; and in no long time, its place is supplied by globules of mercury, the chlorine being entirely abstracted by the protochloride, which consequently passes to the state of a bichloride. Calomel is similarly affected.

In the fluid state.

(a.) *Reduction.* Add to the solution a little of the protochloride of tin. If mercury be present, a bluish gray or grayish black precipitate falls down. After boiling, allow this precipitate to fall down in a proper glass tube, (see page 352) and decant off the superincumbent fluid as far as possible. Afterwards draw off the remaining fluid by the pipette, (page 359) pour water over it, and withdraw again, after the precipitate has once more subsided. The bottom of the tube is then cut off with a file, and the moisture which remains is driven off with a gentle heat. The powder, which is nothing else than metallic mercury, may often be now seen in running globules. If not sufficiently coalesced to determine their nature, they may be scraped together with the point of a penknife, or by applying heat to the tube, a ring of minute globules will be formed. Of the liquid tests, Dr. Christison deems the four following as the most satisfactory.

(b.) Sulphuretted hydrogen, when transmitted in a stream through a solution of corrosive sublimate, causes a dark brownish black precipitate, the bisulphuret of mercury. Before the blackening commences, the gas forms a whitish or yellowish precipitate.* The hydrosulphate (sulphuret) of ammonia may be alternatively used, instead of the sulphuretted hydrogen.

(c.) Hydriodate of potash causes a beautiful pale scarlet precipitate, which rapidly deepens in tint. This is the biniodide of mercury. Care is however necessary in using this test. If applied in too large a quantity, the precipitate will

* Professor Pfaff, of Kiel, is said to have discovered the presence of corrosive sublimate by means of this test, though it was diluted with forty thousand times its bulk of water. (Annals of Philosophy, vol. 5, p. 22.) See also M. Rose on the action of sulphuretted hydrogen gas on solutions of mercury, in Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 5, p. 310. He observes, that unless sufficient gas be added, the precipitate will be a combination of sulphuret and undecomposed protochloride of mercury.

dissolve in the excess of the hydriodate; if too little, it will dissolve in the excess of corrosive sublimate.

(d.) *Protochloride of tin* gives a white precipitate which, when more of the test is added, gives place to a grayish black one. The reason of this has been already explained. Metallic mercury is finally formed. This is an extremely minute test. Dr. Bostock says, that two drops of the muriate, added to a solution which contained $\frac{1}{300,000}$ of its weight of the sublimate, caused an obvious precipitate. When diluted, so that the fluid held only $\frac{1}{3,000,000}$ of its weight of the salt, two drops produced an immediate gray cloud, but no precipitate was thrown down.*

(e.) Nitrate of silver causes a heavy white precipitate, the chloride of silver, which darkens on exposure to light.

Other tests have been enumerated by various writers.

(f.) Lime water in small quantity precipitates the solution, of an orange yellow colour, but if increased, the precipitate becomes red. In still greater quantity, "the precipitate is transformed into an oxide at maximum of a beautiful yellow."

(g.) A solution of saturated carbonate of potash, (salt of tartar) produces a deep brick coloured precipitate. Carbonate of soda has the same effect.

(h.) The caustic alcoholised potash, poured in small quantity on a saturated solution, forms a yellowish red precipitate, but if, on the contrary, the potash in excess be poured on it, the precipitate will be a beautiful yellow. The precipitate, both in this experiment and in experiment g, on being dried and exposed to heat in a glass tube, will give out metallic mercury.

If, however, the solution of corrosive sublimate is very much diluted, the caustic potash will throw down a white precipitate.†

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 14.

† The distinct effects produced by lime water and pure potash on calomel and corrosive sublimate, are well shown in an analysis performed by Messrs. Tyson and Fisher at Baltimore, in May, 1835. A valuable horse was supposed to be poisoned, but a grain only of the suspected matter was sent to them. They proved first, by sulphuretted hydrogen, by hydriodate of potash, and by the galvanic circle, that the substance was mercury. In order to ascertain its exact nature, they placed a portion of the powder in a tube, and applied heat. The whole was sublimed in a beautiful white powder. Liquid potash added to this gave a black precipitate, and lime water

(i.) A solution of pure ammonia produces a permanent white precipitate. On the application of heat it becomes yellow. Although this is a delicate test, yet it is not a certain one, as ammonia throws down a white precipitate in other metallic solutions.

(k.) The triple prussiate (ferrocyanate) of potash gives a white precipitate, which in a short time becomes yellow, and afterwards passes into a clear Prussian blue. All these changes of colour are generally produced within thirty-six hours.

(l.) If a perfectly clean plate of copper be plunged into a solution of corrosive sublimate, and left there for an hour or two, it will become tarnished, but on rubbing it with a piece of paper, it assumes a white, shining and silvery appearance, owing to a coating of metallic mercury. The same effect will be produced if the corrosive sublimate be dropped on it, or if any of the precipitates obtained in experiments *f*, *g*, *h*, *i*, and *k*, be rubbed over it. This effect is now explained as a galvanic action, and a piece of gold clasped by a zinc wire and immersed in the sublimate solution, was obviously whitened in an hour, although the solution in question only contained $\frac{1}{24000}$ of its weight of the salt.

(m.) The following elegant test was proposed by Mr. Sylvester, and improved by Dr. Paris. It is an application of galvanic electricity. Drop a small quantity of the suspected solution on a polished plate of gold, and then touch the gold, through the solution, with the point of a small iron wire or a key. As soon as the galvanic circuit is completed, if corrosive sublimate be present, the gold will become silvery white in consequence of the formation of the amalgam.*

also a brownish black one—in both, the black oxide of mercury; and thus proving that the suspected powder was calomel. (Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 7, p. 105.)

* Nicholson's Journal, No. 154: Paris's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 269. In the case of Mary Bateman, in 1809, Mr. Chorley, a surgeon, immersed a penknife in the solution, and by rubbing it, numerous globules of mercury were produced, and the knife at the same time was blackened. Here (says Dr. Paris) the steel knife decomposed the corrosive sublimate, formed chloride of iron, and the mercury, unable to amalgamate, appeared in globules. (Ibid. vol. 2, p. 270.)

A gold ring, armed with tin foil, immersed in the suspected solution, and to which a drop of muriatic acid is added, has been recommended by Smithson, and followed by Nicole, to reduce the sublimate. (North American Medical and Surgical Journal; vol. 1, p. 468.) But Orfila has shown the fallacy of this, in proving that the gold

(n.) A solution of albumen causes a white precipitate, which is soluble in a considerable excess of the reagent. "The precipitate is a compound of calomel and albumen—a chloride of albumen and mercury."

The next point of importance is, whether any substances which by possibility may be present in the stomach, or any of the human fluids, will change the nature of the poison, or will alter the operation of the above tests? Orfila has made this the subject of notice.

Corrosive sublimate, according to him, is decomposed sooner or later, and converted into the submuriate, by most vegetable substances, distilled waters, extracts, oils, syrups, honey and gums. Muriatic acid gas is set at liberty, and calomel will be precipitated, with a portion of the vegetable matter which has undergone some change. A decoction of tea throws down instantly a yellowish gray precipitate in flakes, which becomes pulverulent, and of a violet colour by desiccation, while at the same time, if the water be much loaded with sugar, no alteration takes place till after several days; and alcohol produces no effect for the space of three or four months. The action of albumen on a solution of corrosive sublimate, deserves particular notice. If a considerable quantity of the latter is poured on the former, a white flaky precipitate is formed, which, on being dried, is brittle, semi-transparent, of a yellowish colour, and insoluble in water. On being submitted to heat in a glass tube, the products are principally charcoal, metallic mercury volatilized and adhering to the sides of the tube, and muriatic acid. Small quantities of corrosive sublimate produce milkiness, and the slow deposition of a precipitate. Gelatine causes similar change and decomposition as albumen. Osmazome gives a reddish yellow precipitate, and bile a yellow one, inclining to red. A concentrated solution of corrosive sublimate brought in contact with a large quantity of milk, produced no visible change, but when seven parts of the solution and one of milk were united, a white coagulum instantly formed, which collected

will be whitened by the action of the muriatic acid on the tin alone, without requiring the addition of mercury. (Brande's Journal, N. S., vol. 6, p. 183; *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 559.)

together, and over it floated a liquor extremely clear. Ordinary soup mixed with it in the proportion of one to six, produced a white precipitate. Fibrin or flesh, on being immersed in a solution of corrosive sublimate, loses its solidity and becomes friable.*

The experiments of Professor Taddei of Florence, have also shown that gluten possesses the power in a high degree, of decomposing corrosive sublimate. If the salt in solution be mixed with the gluten of wheat, in the proportion of four times its weight, the water will be found no longer to contain any mercury, while the gluten becomes whitish, brittle, hard and not prone to putrefaction. The protochloride of mercury and gluten is formed.†

It appears thus, that many common substances will decompose the corrosive sublimate, and convert it into submuriate; and the operation of the liquid tests must necessarily be equivocal.

“In all these compounds, thus formed, the powder may be boiled in a solution of caustic potash. The organized matter is dissolved; a heavy, grayish black powder is formed, which is the protoxide of mercury;” and this on the application of heat, will form running quicksilver. “*As the potash thus separates the mercury in the form of protoxide, it follows that it existed in the compound in the form of protochloride.*”‡

In organic mixtures.

1. *Dr. Christison's process.* Divide all the soft solids into small fragments, and boil the mass in distilled water. Filter a small portion, and to this add the protochloride of tin.§ If

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 37 to 46.

† In confirmation of this it may be added, that on the trial of Michael Whiting for administering corrosive sublimate to his brother-in-law, in dumplings, the house-keeper deposed that she could scarcely make the flour into dumplings with milk; they broke and crumbled into little pieces; and another witness said that the unboiled dumplings were more like glazier's putty than paste, though not greasy. Dr. Paris confirmed these results by his own experiments. (Paris' Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 265.)

‡ Christison, p. 337.

§ Dr. Bostock in his “Experiments to ascertain how far the presence of albumen and muriatic acid interferes with the action of bichloride of mercury and protomuriate of tin upon each other,” (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 23, p. 65,) has shown that the presence of albumen may diminish, but not very seriously, the minute powers of the tin; that when coagulated albumen is combined with the mercury, the addition of tin will still detect the poison; but not when the compound

it causes a pretty deep ash gray or grayish black colour, take the whole of the remaining fluid unfiltered, and agitate it for a few minutes with about a fourth part of its volume of sulphuric ether. This abstracts the salt from its aqueous solution. After being left at rest for a few minutes, the ethereal solution rises to the surface, and may then be removed by suction with the pipette. (See page 359.)* It is next to be filtered, if necessary, evaporated to dryness, and the residue treated with boiling water. The fluid thus obtained, must be tested as directed under the examination of corrosive sublimate, in the fluid state: *But if the shade from the protochloride of tin is not deep*, omit the above and continue treating the mixture with that salt as long as any precipitate or coagulum is formed. Even if but a small quantity of mercury be present, it will have a slate gray tint. Collect this, and wash and drain it on a filter, "from which it is then to be removed without being dried, and care should be taken not to tear away with it any fibres of the paper, as these would obstruct the succeeding operation." Next boil the precipitate in a solution of caustic potash, until all the lumps disappear. If the solution be now left at rest, a heavy grayish black powder will begin to fall down in a few seconds. This is chiefly metallic mercury, which may be distinguished by the naked eye or a magnifier. After a proper time, remove the supernatant fluid, and transfer the powder into a small glass tube, and wash it repeatedly, till the washings do not taste alkaline. The black powder should be allowed to subside for several hours. It may then be heated and sublimed as already directed.

Dr. Christison states, that by this last process, he has detected a quarter of a grain of corrosive sublimate, mixed with two ounces of beef, or with five ounces of new milk, or porter, or tea, made with a liberal allowance of cream and sugar.

has been dissolved in hot water. The protomuriate of tin was added to this fluid, without any effect. Muriatic acid presented no obstacle, but rather aided the action of the test, by promoting the coagulation of the albumen.

* Devergié, in a recent memoir on the detection of corrosive sublimate, objects that ether does not take up all the mercury. He tested the remaining liquid with the plate of gold and tin, and found marked traces. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 11, p. 414.)

He found the tenth part of a grain in four ounces of the last mixture, i. e. in 19,200 times its weight.*

2. *Orfila and Lesueur's process.* This will only answer, according to Dr. Christison, when the proportion of corrosive sublimate is considerable. They direct that the whole of the solids and fluids be boiled at once in a solution of caustic potass, so as to dissolve the organic matter and separate the protoxide of mercury, which may be subsequently converted by heat into the metal.

3. *Devergie's process.* Treat the suspected mixture with diluted muriatic acid till all the solid matter is dissolved. Evaporate so as to expel most of the acid employed. Add water to the rest, and transmit chlorine to coagulate and remove the animal matter. Filter, boil and concentrate. Then immerse for ten minutes a small plate of pure tin. If mercury be present, the tin will be immediately whitened. Continue this with successive plates until the whitening ceases. Dry the plates, scrape off the tarnished surface, put the scrapings in a proper tube and heat them over a spirit lamp. The mercury will be driven off from the amalgam and condense in a ring of globules.†

4. *Professor Buchner's process.* Evaporate the suspected mixture to dryness and boil the residue in nitro-muriatic acid till the decomposition of the organic matter is at an end, which is indicated by the cessation of the discharge of orange fumes. Then treat the solution with sulphuretted hydrogen gas, which occasions first a white and then a black precipitate. This precipitate is then to be collected and heated in a tube with a little carbonate of soda, previously deprived of its water of crystallization; upon which globules of metallic mercury are sublimed.

5. *Dr. O'Shaughnessy's process.* He proposes to use ether and protochloride of tin successively in trial experiments. If

* Christison, p. 339.

† The above is copied, like all the others, from Dr. Christison, p. 342, &c. Devergie has subsequently recommended a modification of this process. He now directs concentrated muriatic acid to be used. The remainder is similar to the above, except that in place of tin alone, he advises the immersion of a piece of gold bound with tin, thus forming the galvanic pile, (*une pile d'or et d'étain.*) (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 11, p. 432.)

neither of them gives an indication of mercury, filter, acidulate the fluid part with nitric acid, and concentrate by evaporation. Boil the solid part in a solution of caustic potash, add a large excess of nitric acid, and digest with a gentle heat in a Florence flask, for at least six hours. Filter, unite with the fluid part of the mixture, and concentrate the whole by evaporation. Filter again after cooling. Introduce into this fluid a thin slip of gold bound with a coil of iron wire. The gold will become amalgamated.*

6. *Dr. Venables' process.* Nitric acid in excess is agitated on the solid matter of the mixture. Chlorine gas is then transmitted through the fluid to convert the mercury into the chloride. The mixture is next boiled to destroy organic matter as much as possible, and then filtered and evaporated, and as it becomes dark or thick under evaporation, solution of chlorine is added from time to time. It is then neutralized with potash, and filtered and treated with proto-chloride of tin. The precipitate is collected as has been already directed, and the mercury sublimed in a tube. Dr. Venables was thus able to detect mercury in the tissues of the stomach and duodenum of the individual whose case I have quoted from him, although she lived eight days and had vomited much at first.†

7. *Fischer's process.* In a little glass jar three or four inches deep and an inch in diameter, is suspended by means of a perforated cork fitted to the mouth of the jar, a small glass tube three inches long, half an inch in diameter, and covered at its lower end with bladder. Between the tube and side of the jar is a semi-cylindrical plate of zinc nearly as long as the jar is deep, and the upper end of this plate, which is cut small for the purpose, perforates the cork of the jar. This little tube has a cork fitted to it, through which a thin platina wire, terminated by a slip of platina foil a tenth of an inch in breadth and an inch in length, passes nearly to the bladder at the bottom of the tube. The mercurial fluid being poured into the

* *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 420.

† On applying the flame of a spirit lamp, a dew, consisting of a number of minute globules, was formed on the neck of the tube. They were united into one by applying the point of a penknife, and Dr. Venables estimates the quantity thus obtained at 1-16th of a grain of metallic mercury.

central tube and a solution of muriate of ammonia or lime into the jar around the tube, the upper part of the platina wire is brought in contact with the upper end of the zinc plate. The galvanic action now goes on, and metallic mercury forms on the platina foil. This, as will be observed, is another form of applying galvanic action. It should be allowed to go on for two days. Then remove the platina, dry it, fold it in as small a space as possible, afterwards heat it in a glass tube.

It is evident that several of these processes may be employed in the same case, and thus an accumulation of testimony will be presented.

Should calomel or metallic mercury be found in the alimentary canal, how far is this to be deemed a presumptive proof of the exhibition of corrosive sublimate?

I have mentioned repeatedly that many animal and vegetable substances decompose corrosive sublimate and reduce it to the state of calomel. The following problem is therefore put by Orfila. A person out of health takes some calomel as a purgative and dies in three or four hours afterwards, under suspicion of poisoning. How are we to distinguish between these cases? Our author answers this by observing, 1. That the calomel which has been taken may be found on the membranes of the intestinal canal in the form of a white powder, which it is insoluble in water; that it becomes black on adding lime water; that it preserves its physical properties, and even when combined with solid alimentary substances, it will, on the addition of water, fall down, in consequence of its greater specific gravity. 2. That the calomel which results from the decomposition of corrosive sublimate, and the presence of which warrants us in pronouncing that poison has been taken, is never applied in the form of powder to the membranes of the alimentary canal; it never has the physical properties of common calomel, since it is intimately combined with the substance which has been the cause of its formation, (forming, indeed, in several instances, a ternary chemical compound). Lastly, lime water, when added to it, induces no change.*

* Orfila's Toxicologić, 3d edition, vol. 1, p. 301. The cases of Ollivier and Baruel occurred subsequent to the publication of the above, and I add the principal re-

The following case was lately referred by the law authorities in France to him. A female, after suffering under what are usually styled bilious symptoms, died rather suddenly, with previous vomiting and diarrhœa. There was, however, no immediate suspicion of poisoning, and the body was not taken up until fifteen days after burial. There were several perforations in the stomach, but no softening, and there were many black stains. Both in this viscus, and in several of the intestines, (large and small) mercurial globules were found and collected, to the amount of upwards of two drachms. On boiling the intestines also, every part appeared as if penetrated by a mercurial dew.

The most careful analysis of the contents of the alimentary canal failed to detect any poison in them, and the question presented to Orfila was, whether the discovery of metallic mercury in a person who had died with many symptoms indicative of irritant poisons, could originate from swallowing some poisonous compound of mercury, which was subsequently decomposed and reduced to the metallic state in the body.

In answer to this, our author found that corrosive sublimate is not reduced by the ordinary contents of the stomach and intestines to the metallic state, since, in a dog poisoned by it and buried for two months, the mercury was found united with the textures, in the form of an insoluble triple compound of mercury. Chlorine and animal matter, but no globule, could be discovered, even with the microscope. The red oxide of mercury is also incapable of being reduced. The protoxide exhibits no more appearance of globules than

sults of their chemical examination in this place, that the reader may compare them with the statements in the text. The fluid found in the stomach was not affected by sulphuretted hydrogen, and as a necessary consequence, the poison was not present in it. The curdy and mucous matters also found there were next tested, and although milk and albumen had been taken as antidotes, yet on being triturated with a solution of potash, no black precipitate was caused, as would have been the case if calomel had been present. On the contrary, *yellow* flocculi were thrown down, indicating the existence, in all probability, of corrosive sublimate, still undecomposed.

These yellow flocculi were subjected to the action of chlorine, and after that, a plate of gold, surrounded by a spiral one of tin, was immersed in the liquor. The gold was whitened, as was also the tin, in the intervals which separated each turn. The last had also become brittle.

It thus evidently appears, that although milk and albumen decompose the salt, yet this is not always complete. Ollivier indeed remarks, that in one case it was so involved in the caseous matter, that it was prevented from being further altered, and from acting on the organs containing it.

it does previous to being swallowed. The protonitrate exhibits them under peculiar circumstances, but so firmly adhering to the inner membrane that they cannot be displaced. The compounds of mercury, when it is merely in a state of minute division, will present them, but it is merely separation, and not decomposition. Orfila next tried the effect of introducing into the stomach, along with the poison, some substances which are capable of reducing it to a metallic state, as oil of turpentine, and some of the salts of iron or copper. The animals died, and the mercury was found reduced, but no globules were visible to the naked eye, nor could they be displaced from the membranes of the stomach.

He therefore was of opinion that the female had not been poisoned by a salt of mercury, but that probably some of it in a metallic state had been given.*

The rapid progress of medico-legal analysis is strikingly seen in the history of the tests of this salt. Being soluble and very liable to be discharged by vomiting, and above all, being readily decomposed by many substances, it is not surprising that chemists could not discover it, even under the most favourable circumstances, in the fluid contents of the stomach. In the experiments of Dr. Bostock on dogs, the very tests which proved the presence of corrosive sublimate in the most minute quantity, were unable to shew its presence in the fluids of the animals which he had previously poisoned with this very substance, and they only indicated the existence of muriatic acid.† Drs. Henry and Roget examined the fluid vomited by a female who had poisoned herself, with all the tests mentioned in the chemical work of the former, but neither in this liquid, nor in that found in the stomach after death, were any traces of the poison discoverable.‡ “In vain, (says Orfila,) should we seek, in the general way, for corrosive sublimate in the liquids vomited; neither are the

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 34, p. 434, from the *Archives G n rales*. According to Rose, neither the peroxide or perchloride of mercury, when mixed with organic matter, can be reduced to the metallic state, unless potash, either in its pure or carbonated form, be added to it, “without the addition of an alkali, the reduction to metallic mercury does not take place.” It is suggested (Lancet, N. S., vol. 8, p. 33,) that this was altogether omitted in the experiments of Orfila.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 5, p. 16.

‡ Ibid. vol. 7, p. 150.

contents of the stomach more calculated to discover its presence. The decomposition which it has undergone by its union with other substances, has rendered it insoluble. *It is in the solids, in the tissue itself of our organs, that it must be sought for.*" In confirmation of the latter remark, he mentions a case, in which he took a portion of the intestines of a cock, and put it in a solution of corrosive sublimate for three days. It was then boiled, dried in a capsule of porcelain, and finally calcined in a retort. Globules of mercury were soon seen condensed in its neck. The stomach of a dead rabbit, into which a solution of corrosive sublimate had been injected, was treated in the same way, with a similar result. Again, it is stated by Taddei, that in cases of corrosion, if the slough be examined before it is thrown off, it will yield mercury by chemical analysis.*

It is evident from these facts, that the solid parts should be examined in all criminal cases.

I will conclude this part of my subject with a brief narrative of a few of these. And the first that may be noticed is interesting, from involving the decision of a curious question connected with the action of mercurial medicines, viz. *whether pytalism is capable of a complete intermission?*

Jane Butterfield was tried at Croydon, (England) in August, 1775, for the murder of Mr. Scawen. It appears that she had resided with him for many years as his mistress.

Mr. Scawen had been salivated with a quack medicine from the beginning till the middle of April. After that it ceased, and his health was decidedly improved. But in the middle of June he was again attacked with severe salivation and its consequences; sloughs formed, and he died some weeks thereafter.

Against the prisoner it was urged, that the last sickness must have originated from the administration of corrosive sublimate in small doses, and that the previous medicine could not have induced these fatal consequences. Mr. Young and Dr. Sanders, witnesses for the prosecution, deposed that they had never known a salivation to recur after such an interval.

* Christison, p. 389.

For the prisoner, on the other hand, Mr. Bromfield, surgeon of St. George's Hospital, testified that he had repeatedly seen cases in which the salivation had returned, after every effort had been made to evacuate the mercury from the system; that in one instance, the interval had been three months; and that one of his patients was attacked periodically at intervals of six months or a month for a whole year. Mr. Howard, another London hospital surgeon, confirmed Mr. Bromfield's evidence, by declaring that he had frequently experienced the same, and that mercury was of so subtle a nature that it was not possible for any man to say for what length of time it might lie dormant before it reappeared. He had known fifty instances of persons discharged from the Lock Hospital, perfectly free of salivation, and upon some sudden change in the constitution, from a cold or some other cause, they were as bad again as while they were under a course of mercury. The prisoner was acquitted.*

Dr. Gordon Smith, in commenting on this case, cites similar ones from Drs. Mead and Male, and adds the following on his own authority: "Dr. Hamilton, professor of midwifery in the University of Edinburgh, related a case in his lectures, of a married lady, who had been under the necessity of going through a course of mercury, in consequence of her husband's imprudence, under the care of the late Mr. Bennet. This gentleman, from motives of delicacy, did not inquire very minutely into the particulars, but according to the rule of the day, gave his patient a sore mouth. Four months afterwards, she miscarried, and salivation again came on. It was removed for a week, at the end of which it returned, and harrassed her for about a twelvemonth."†

These narratives are not, however, universally credited. "Granting the ptyalism to be in every instance really mercurial, it would require much better evidence than any practitioner could procure, to determine the fact that mercury had not been given again during the supposed interval." Doubt-

* Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence, p. 234; Dodsley's Annual Register, 1775.

† Forensic Medicine, p. 114. See also his third edition, appendix, p. 16. Dr. Graves of Dublin, relates of a lady who has been subject for a length of time to occasional returns of salivation. (Lancet, N. S. vol. 10, p. 176, from the Dublin Journal.)

less also, in some cases, the salivation has been independent of mercury.*

Michael Whiting was tried and convicted at Ely in England, in 1812, for administering poison to his two brothers-in-law, minors, and in the event of whose death he expected some property. The corrosive sublimate was added to flour, from which it was intended to make dumplings; and it was in preparing these, that the mutual action of the gluten and salt was witnessed, which I have already quoted. The boys found the food so disagreeable, that they could not proceed in eating their dinner, and they were each taken ill. On analysis, corrosive sublimate was detected both in the boiled and unboiled dumplings, by chemists at Cambridge. The prisoner, before execution, confessed his guilt.†

Mr. Hodgson, a surgeon in Sunderland, was indicted in August 1824, for administering poison to his wife, with an intent to murder her. Dr. Brown had been attending her for rheumatism, and had prescribed calomel and opium in repeated doses, with some relief to her complaints. On the 6th of June, she was attacked, immediately after taking the same medicine, with violent burning in the throat, gullet and stomach. She supposed some mistake had been made, but was urged to take the other dose; and after doing so, was still more violently affected. Severe vomiting, with cold skin and feeble pulse, ensued; the pain also was extreme down to the pit of the stomach. Dr. Brown, on being sent for, prescribed an anodyne draught; but was astonished, on tasting the medicine which had been prepared by the prisoner, to find it acrid, like corrosive sublimate. Becoming now suspicious, he prescribed whites of eggs, with immediate relief. The next day she had slight diarrhœa; and on the third, ptyalism; but she gradually recovered. The draught which Dr. Brown received from the prisoner, was preserved and analyzed. Carbonate of potash produced in it a pale brick red precipitate; ammonia, a brownish white one; lime water, a yellowish brown one; and when acted on by galvanism, it amalgamated gold. On the part of

* Christison, p. 372. *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 5, p. 324.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 8, p. 849.

the prisoner, the principal plea was that he had made a mistake, in taking the wrong substance—having prepared a solution of corrosive sublimate for a patient. He was acquitted.*

It is of this trial that Dr. Christison remarks, that a medical witness would be justified in giving an opinion, from the symptoms alone, that poison had been taken. "No natural disease could produce a sense of burning from the throat to the epigastrium, *so very sudden and so very acute.*"

Antidotes. Alkaline salts and earths were formerly in high repute as antidotes against corrosive sublimate, and cases are to be found in medical journals where they would seem to have cured the sufferers.† They have also failed, and the same remark will apply to the sulphurets, the infusion of Peruvian bark, and sugar.

We are therefore infinitely indebted to Orfila for introducing ALBUMEN as an antidote to this substance. If taken in sufficient quantity, it decomposes the metallic salt, forming a triple compound, consisting of albumen, muriatic acid and calomel. Our author proved its efficacy in several experiments on animals. "It has the advantage of being always at hand, and there is no danger of giving it to excess. The practical rule, therefore, is, that as soon as we are called to a person suspected of having taken corrosive sublimate, we should make him swallow as many whites of eggs, well mixed with water, as the stomach can contain. It will immediately decompose the metallic salt remaining in the stomach; and if it excite fresh vomiting, so much the better. Along with this, blood-letting may be had recourse to, in order to overcome the inflammation already excited."‡ Mucilaginous drinks are also very useful as accessory remedies.§

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 438. I have also the London Courier of August 21, 1824, in which the report of the trial originally appeared.

† See a case in the Edinburgh Medical Essays, vol. 6, p. 432, from the *Commerc. Norimb.* 1735, where the *Oleum tartar per deliquium*, and mild drinks, appear to have been the principal agents in effecting a cure. The salt of tartar and salt of wormwood have each been recommended. (Medical Commentaries, vol. 6, p. 324, 415.)

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 11, p. 132. Dr. Peschier, of Geneva, has ascertained that it requires an ounce of whites of eggs, to neutralize four grains of corrosive sublimate, taken as a poison. (Lond. Med. Repos. vol. 6, p. 167.)

§ A case in which the whites of eggs were given with perfect success, is related by Dr. Lendrick, in the Transactions of the College of Physicians of Dublin. (London Medical Repository, vol. 15, p. 495.) See also another case in *Ibid.* vol. 13, p. 480.

Several instances of recovery through its means are on record, and in addition to those cited below, I will only mention that of Thenard the chemist. While lecturing at the Polytechnic School in February 1825, he swallowed by mistake a glass of the concentrated solution of corrosive sublimate. In five minutes, whites of eggs were obtained and taken. He vomited repeatedly, (more than twenty times,) but never had any pain or other ill consequence.*

Dr. Taddei, of Italy, has lately recommended wheat flour, or gluten, as an antidote. He was led to this, from ascertaining that it reduced corrosive sublimate to the state of calomel, and that considerable quantities of a mixture of flour or gluten with corrosive sublimate might be taken by animals without any injurious effects. In this way, fourteen grains of corrosive sublimate were given, in less than twelve hours, to rabbits and poultry, without injury; whereas a single grain would have been fatal if taken alone. Twenty-five grains of fresh, or thirteen of dry gluten, or from five to six hundred grains of wheaten flour, are necessary to render a grain of corrosive sublimate innocent; and Dr. Taddei recommends that dried gluten be kept for the purpose in question in apothecaries' shops. When administered, it is only necessary to mix it with it with a little water.†

Dr. Duncan objects to the preparation of gluten as recommended by Dr. Taddei, as troublesome and tedious; and observes, that giving wheat flour diffused through water, will prove equally efficacious.‡

When neither albumen or flour is at hand, milk is a convenient antidote of the same kind.

In experiments on animals, Mylne Edwards and Dumas found that iron filings would decompose corrosive sublimate.§ Meconic acid also will decompose it, but this is hardly to be recommended for the human subject.||

* London Medical Repository, vol. 23, p. 435.

† Taddei, Recherches. Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 3, p. 406.

‡ Duncan's Supplement, p. 140.

§ Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 9, p. 612.

|| Cannot physicians unite in abandoning the terms *protochloride* and *deutochloride* of mercury, *protomuriate* and *deutomuriate* of mercury, and return to the old fashioned

The red precipitate and the red oxide of mercury. These substances, in considerable quantities, are violent poisons. Ploucquet mentions a case of an individual who, by accident, swallowed some red precipitate. He immediately experienced violent colics, copious vomitings, a trembling in all his limbs, and cold sweats.

There is a recent case recorded, of poisoning by red precipitate. It occurred at Guy's Hospital in 1833. The symptoms were cold surface, stupor, small and feeble pulse, eructation and frothy discharge from the mouth, with occasional vomiting of a red powder. There was no pain on pressure.

The stomach pump was freely used, and afterwards flour and water and the whites of eggs were given. By these remedies, the patient recovered; but salivation ensued, and there was some pain in urinating.

The vomited matter was treated with dilute muriatic acid, and yielded metallic mercury.*

The red precipitate is readily ascertained by the application of heat to a little in a glass tube. Metallic globules are sublimed, and oxygen gas is disengaged.

Nitrate of mercury. There is also one fatal case of poisoning by this, given by Dr. Bigsley. An escharotic liquid used for the cure of "foot halt" in sheep, is made by dissolving seven parts of mercury in eight of nitric acid. Of this, a lad aged 16, at Newark upon Trent, took a tea spoonful for the purpose of committing suicide. Vomiting and great pain soon followed. The throat and mouth were very sore, and he retched violently, and the pulse labouring and indistinct. Diarrhœa succeeded.

The stomach pump was used, and chalk given; but the pain continued from the mouth downward, and vomiting and purging recurred at intervals until his death, in three hours after taking the poison. His mind was unimpaired to the last.

On dissection, marks of inflammation were seen in the mouth, pharynx and stomach. The mucous coat of each was

and distinctive ones of *corrosive sublimate* and *calomel*? How many lives have been lost by mistakes in this way! Three children were thus poisoned at Paris in 1834. (*Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 13, p. 225.)

* Mr. Brett, in *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 13, p. 117.

of a deep rose red, with some eschars; but no perforation. The duodenum and colon were less strongly inflamed.*

Cinnabar or vermilion (sulphuret of mercury) would appear from the experiments of Orfila on animals, to be innoxious when well washed.

According to the experiments of Barthez, the *deutobromide* of mercury is an active irritant poison. It produces high inflammation of the intestinal canal, and in some instances ulcers. When the experiment permitted, most of it was rejected by vomiting.†

It is not necessary to notice the other preparations of mercury in detail, since their effects, in large quantities, and their modes of detection, are similar to those already mentioned. And I will only allude to the numerous cases which of late years have been described under the names of *hydrargyria*, *mercurial erithrismus*, &c. as proving that the mildest preparations of mercury may, under certain circumstances, and in peculiar constitutions, prove highly dangerous, and even fatal.

Mercurial vapours, and mercury in a state of extreme division. Mercurial vapours are undoubtedly to be deemed poisonous. Many cases are on record, which prove that workmen employed in mercurial mines, gilders, silverers of looking glasses, &c. are subject to serious accidents from their callings. This however is a point which I shall notice at length in another place, when treating of the *diseases incident to particular trades and professions*.

The usual consequences of a long exposure to them, are "trembling and paralysis of the limbs, vertigo, loss of memory and of the other intellectual faculties, salivation and ulceration of the mouth; colic, asthma, hæmoptisis, atrophy, apoplexy and death."

The following is a remarkable illustration of the effects of

* London Medical Gazette, vol. 7, p. 329. In a case where a saturated solution of nitrate of mercury was by mistake rubbed into the hip and thigh, suppression of urine for five days followed. Profuse pyalism came on the third day, and the parts sloughed superficially. The patient however recovered. It is remarkable that no comatose symptoms ensued from the long continued suppression. (Case by Professor Syme, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 44, p. 23.)

† North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 219.

mercury, in a volatilized state, on the human system. A large quantity of quicksilver (about thirty tons) was saved from the wreck of a Spanish ship about Cadiz, by the *Triumph* man of war and the *Phipps* schooner, both English vessels. It was placed in their spirit rooms. An alarming illness soon broke out among the crews, all of whom were more or less salivated. The surgeons, pursers and three petty officers who were nearest the place where it was stowed, felt its effects the most, as their heads and tongues were swelled to the most alarming degree. Every rat, mouse and cockroach on board the *Phipps* were destroyed. And it was noticed, that those who slept close to where the quicksilver had flowed in consequence of escaping from the bags, suffered slightly in comparison to those who slept over the bags. Every thing metallic was whitened.

The explanation of this distressing event is not difficult. The quicksilver had lain for some time in salt water, and when on board, the leather bags containing it rotted. Add to these, the effects of gases generated on board ships, and we have sufficient agents at hand to cause the rise, suspension and oxidation of the metal. Dr. George Pearson suggested that sulphuretted hydrogen was probably the principal cause.*

When the effect of heat is added, the results are of the most marked kind. A conflagration broke out in the quicksilver mines of Idria in 1803, which resisted every effort for five weeks. As a last resource, the mine was laid under water. This succeeded, but it required two years to prepare an apparatus to pump out the water. "Even when the galleries had been cleared of the water, it was impossible to work in them, partly from the heat they still retained, but still more from the fumes of sublimated mercury, which produced in the miners, a violent salivation accompanied with

* Philosophical Transactions for 1823. Dr. Burnett, who gives this account, ascribes it to the mercurial vapours. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 6. p. 513. A correspondent of the *Philadelphia National Gazette*, newspaper of March 25, 1824, says that he was a witness of this occurrence, and that the sailors, imagining it to be silver, concealed it in their pocket handkerchiefs and every where around their persons. The ship was so contaminated with it, that she was finally condemned as unfit for service.

convulsions and trembling of the limbs. To produce an almost inhuman zeal, high wages were offered to such as would venture into places reckoned the most dangerous, to explore the consequences of the disaster, and collect the quicksilver which had been deposited in large quantities in the galleries. Many purchased this additional pittance with their lives; and altogether the atmosphere which continued for months to infest the mine, was so baneful that it was difficult to muster a sufficient number of healthy men for ordinary occupations.*

Whether metallic mercury should be deemed a poison, is another question concerning which there is much diversity of opinion. We know that it has often been exhibited in large doses with salutary effects, and indeed in the days of Dr. Dover, two or three drachms of it were a common morning draught, as a preservative against gout and gravel. I apprehend that the proper distinction to be taken respecting it is, that when it can be so acted on, as to be oxidated, even in the smallest degree, (as for example, mixed with fat or oil, or even by friction alone,) it *may* prove deleterious. Mr. Faraday has also contributed a valuable fact in illustration of this subject. He put some mercury in a clean dry bottle of about six ounces, which formed a stratum at the bottom, not one-eighth of an inch in thickness. A small piece of leaf-gold was fastened on the under part of the stopper to the bottle, so that when the stopper was put into its place, the leaf-gold was inclosed in the bottle. It was then set aside in a safe place, and after some time, the leaf-gold was found, on examination, whitened by the mercury. He repeated this experiment several times with similar results, and he deduces from it the conclusion, *that at common temperatures, mercury is surrounded by an atmosphere of the same substance.*†

* Edinburgh Journal of Science, vol. 6, p. 212, from Russel's Tour in Germany. Dr. Bright relates the fatal effects of extracting mercury by pressure, out of the bags in which it is imported. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 20, p. 33.)

† Brande's Journal, vol. 10, p. 354. This deduction will probably explain the following remarks of Dr. Falconer of Bath: "Instances (he observes,) of the ill effects even of the external application of mercury, are sometimes found in the use of what are called quicksilver girdles, which are often worn for the itch, especially by females of the lower rank, as being cleaner and more free from fætor than a sulphureous application. Many of these cases have been admitted into the Bath Hospital. The general symptoms were a degree of general weakness approaching to palsy; great pain

ANTIMONY.

A great prejudice formerly existed against the use of metallic preparations, with the exception of iron, and this was carried to such a height as to the compounds of antimony, that the faculty of Paris (among whom Guy Patin was the most conspicuous,) obtained an edict of the parliament of Paris, prohibiting their use as a medicine. Nor was it until one of their sovereigns had been cured by the use of antimony, that they (in 1666,) demanded a sentence permitting its use.* It is to be feared however that the various preparations are often rashly and improperly employed at the present day.

TARTAR EMETIC. This substance in large doses must undoubtedly be deemed a poison. It is, however, far from being as certainly destructive as arsenic or corrosive sublimate.

The narrative of a few cases will properly precede the list of general symptoms.

A Jew, by mistake, took about twenty grains of tartar emetic in the morning, fasting. In a few moments after swallowing it, he experienced pain in the region of the stomach, which increased, and even brought on syncope. After this, excessive vomitings of bilious matter came on with alarming rapidity; aqueous stools occurred incessantly; the pulse was small and concentrated; the face pale; there was great prostration of strength, and the patient complained greatly of extremely painful cramps in the legs. By the use of proper remedies, the symptoms subsided after an illness of about six hours, and debility and painful digestion alone remained.†

A man, aged about fifty years, determined to poison himself, and for this purpose took about forty grains of tartar emetic on a Saturday morning. Vomiting, frequent stools, and convulsions soon succeeded. He was received into the Hotel Dieu on Sunday evening. On Monday morning he complained of violent pains in the epigastrium, which was distended. He

and tremor in the limbs, and often violent headache." (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 8, p. 214, quoted from the Transactions of the Medical Society of London.)

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 710. See also Note to Abridgement, vol. 1, p. 596.

† Case by Dr. Barbier of Amiens, from Magendie. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 174.

could with difficulty move his tongue; he was, in fact, in such a state that he might be taken for a drunken man—he just spoke, and his pulse was imperceptible. During the day, his abdomen became inflated, the epigastrium was considerably tumefied, and became more painful; in the afternoon delirium came on. On Thursday, all the symptoms increased; in the evening there was furious delirium; convulsions supervened, and he died at night.*

The following is a remarkable case. An individual had collected about twenty-five grains of tartar emetic for the purpose of poisoning himself. He went into a coffee-house and asked for a glass of sugared water, and having dissolved the mineral in this, he drank it down. After leaving the coffee-house, which he did instantly, he had scarcely proceeded twenty steps, before he felt a burning pain in the epigastric region, accompanied by convulsive movements and a loss of his senses. He was carried in this situation to the Hotel Dieu, ten minutes after the accident. On coming a little to himself, he confessed his crime, and a decoction of bark was immediately administered in large quantities. The skin was cold and clammy, the breathing a little short, the pulse small and concentrated, and the epigastric region a little tumefied and very painful, hiccup tolerably frequent, but *no vomiting*. The symptoms gradually diminished in violence after taking the bark, and in two hours copious stools occurred and continued for several hours. On the next day he vomited several times, and gastric symptoms were present for a week, but were removed by the usual remedies.†

* Case by Dr. Recamier, from Magendie. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 177.

† Case by Dr. Serres, from Magendie. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 175. Additional cases will be found in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 394. By Dr. Duffin; his own case from taking 20 grains through mistake.

Edinburgh Medical Essays, vol. 4, p. 35. By Mr. Stedman.

New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 8, p. 302. By Dr. Charles Lee. A child a few weeks old swallowed fifteen grains in solution; vomiting and purging ensued, followed by convulsions and death.

Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 592. By Dr. Usher Parsons. Three of the ward room servants, on board the U. S. Squadron on Lake Erie in 1813, in meddling with the medicine chest, took by mistake for cremor tartar, upwards of 40 grains of tartar emetic in solution. They were seized with vomiting and purging, weak, contracted pulse, and cold clammy sweats. All, however, recovered after a few days by the use of proper remedies.

From these and other instances, the following list of symptoms may be deduced: a rough metallic taste, nausea, copious vomitings, frequent hiccup, cardialgia, burning heat in the epigastric region, pains of the stomach, abdominal colic, inflation, copious stools, syncope, small, concentrated and accelerated pulse, cold skin, but sometimes intense heat, difficult breathing, vertigo, loss of sense, convulsive motions, very painful cramps in the legs, prostration of strength, and death. Sometimes to these symptoms is joined a great difficulty of swallowing, and deglutition may be suspended for some time.* The vomitings and alvine excretions do not always take place, and the consequence of this is an increase in the violence of the other symptoms.†

There can be no doubt, from the marked local effects of the tartar emetic ointment, that its external application in large quantities must produce injurious consequences. Whether it would excite the usual symptoms of poisoning, is still a matter of doubt.‡

Appearances on dissection. The mucous membrane of the stomach is usually red, inflamed and covered with mucus. The duodenum is in a similar state, and occasionally the other small intestines. The lungs are often found more or less inflamed, and in some instances the brain is so also, and contains serous fluid. In a general way we may state, that the lungs

* Foderé quotes a case by Dr. Carron, where there was a suspension of deglutition for two days, vol. 4, p. 156.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 178. Male mentions the case of a child who had taken a large dose, and in whom no vomiting occurred. He lay in a state of insensibility, the extremities were cold, the pulse languid and almost imperceptible, but by taking some strong brandy and water, these effects were removed, and violent vomitings succeeded, and the patient recovered, p. 166. See also Journal of Foreign Science, vol. 1, p. 640.

‡ The immunity experienced from large doses of tartar emetic, when given for inflammation of the lungs, and which practice had its origin in Italy, is now explained on the idea of a peculiar condition of the system that accompanies the disease. Twenty grains have thus been given every four or five hours, to the amount of five scruples, without causing either vomiting or diarrhoea. With the return of health, however, the exemption from the ordinary effects ceases.

In the autumnal fevers of our own country, and particularly those of the western states, I have no doubt that a large majority of fatal cases have been owing to the too free use of tartar emetic. Such is the testimony of Dr. Drake and other physicians in that section of the union. Cramp in the stomach is almost the earliest result, and if this be recovered from, inflammation (actual gastritis,) often supervenes. Certainly the use of ipecacuanha is far preferable in these cases. (Western Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, p. 297.)

and the mucous membrane of the digestive canal, are the organs principally affected by this poison.*

In Dr. Lee's case, the mucous coat of the stomach was red and softened, and the duodenum of a deep red colour. The brain and the right side of the heart were distended with blood.

Effect on animals. Magendie and Brodie have each investigated the effects of this salt on animals.

The former ascertained that whenever the œsophagus was tied up in dogs, so as to prevent vomiting, four, six or eight grains produced death at the end of two or three hours; while those who were able to get rid of it by vomiting, often took a drachm, without experiencing any material bad effect. Large doses, (as half an ounce) however, generally caused death in a few hours, or a few days, although instances did happen, where no accident followed from their exhibition.

When a solution of tartar emetic of six or eight grains to three ounces of water, was injected into the veins of a full grown dog, vomiting and purging ensued, the breathing became difficult, the pulse frequent and intermitting, and great disquietude and trembling of the limbs preceded death. On dissection, the lungs were observed of an orange or violet colour, and distended with blood, while the mucous membrane of the intestinal canal, from the cardia to the rectum, was red and inflamed. A larger quantity, injected in a similar manner, produced an earlier death, and the inflammation was confined to the lungs; but a weaker solution took a longer period to develop itself, and the lungs and intestines were equally affected.†

It thus appears, that as a general rule, its first effect is almost always vomiting, in those animals who are capable of this function, and the poison is thus thrown off in many cases before it has had time to produce fatal consequences.

The results obtained by Mr. Brodie were similar in many respects. When applied to a wound in animals capable of vomiting, it usually, but not constantly, operated as an emetic. Paralysis, drowsiness, and at last complete insensibility, were among the symptoms that preceded death. The stomach

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 177.

† Magendie, p. 24, 36, 37.

sometimes bore the marks of inflammation, but he never saw any appearances of it in the intestines. These experiments were performed on rabbits, and the same symptoms were present, whether the tartar emetic was injected into the stomach or applied to a wound. The deduction drawn by Mr. Brodie from these results is, that this mineral does not produce its deleterious effects until it has passed into the circulation.*

Tests. For these I shall follow Professor Turner, who has very carefully and ably examined them.† I will, however, premise by observing that there is considerable discrepancy among chemists as to the solubility of tartar emetic. Dr. Duncan junior, is said to have selected very pure specimens for this examination, and he states that one part is soluble in three times its weight of water at 212° , and in fifteen at 60° . Probably it would be proper, in ordinary cases, to add rather more than these proportions, and particularly as much of the salt in use is far from being pure.

(a.) Caustic potash precipitates it white, if the solution be strong. The first portions of the test have no effect, as the tartrate contains an excess of acid which must be neutralized. The precipitate thrown down, which is the oxide of antimony, is redissolved by an excess of potash.

(b.) Lime-water gives a white precipitate, but not if the solution contains only half a grain to an ounce.

(c.) Subcarbonate of potash is more delicate, and also gives a white precipitate.

(d.) Muriatic and sulphuric acids throw down a white precipitate, and take it up when added in excess.

(e.) Infusion of gallnuts gives a dirty yellowish white precipitate, but is not a minute test.

(f.) The most minute test, however, is sulphuretted hydrogen. In a solution containing only an eighth of a grain per ounce, it strikes an orange red colour, which, when the excess of gas is expelled by heat, becomes an orange red precipitate; and if the proportion of salt is greater, the precipitate is thrown down at once.

* London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 23, p. 126.

† On the Detection of Antimony in Mixed Fluids. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 28, p. 71.

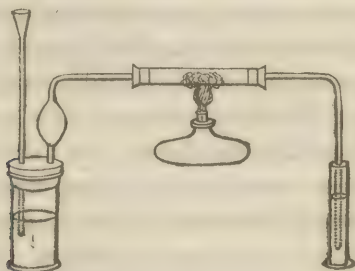
The juices of plants, the extractive decoctions of roots and barks, precipitate the solution of tartar emetic, and produce a reddish yellow deposit, consisting of oxide of antimony and a portion of vegetable matter. According to Dr. Paris, one ounce of the decoction of yellow bark is capable of decomposing one scruple of this salt, and rendering it completely inert.

Tartar emetic poured on milk produces no coagulation, and the mixture gives a clear red precipitate, with the hydro-sulphuret of ammonia. Broth and bile diluted with water, do not alter the action of agents on the tartar emetic.*

In all cases of mixed fluids, Dr. Turner advises that the suspected fluid be acidulated with a little muriatic and tartaric acids. The former will coagulate various animal principles which may be present, and the latter possesses the property of readily dissolving all precipitates whatever, formed by reagents with tartar emetic, except that caused by sulphuretted hydrogen. The fluid so prepared is to be filtered, and a sulphuret formed and collected in the usual way. This may be placed in a horizontal tube, and a continued stream of hydrogen gas passed through it.†

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 166.

† This process was adopted from the known fact that hydrogen will separate sulphur from antimony at an elevated temperature. In performing the experiment, one end of the tube should be connected by means of a cork with a vessel from which the hydrogen is evolved, and to its other end a bent tube must be adjusted to open under water, so as to carry away the hydrogen and at the same time exclude atmospheric air. The following is the form of apparatus recommended by Drs. Turner and Christison.



When all the oxygen of the atmosphere is expelled from the apparatus, heat may be applied with a spirit lamp to the sulphuret. The result is, that sulphuretted hydrogen is evolved, and metallic antimony is left, if the current of hydrogen is gentle, or it is sublimed if the current is rapid. This mode of proceeding was sufficient to detect the metal from only a tenth part of a grain of the sulphuret. If any doubt remain, dissolve the contents of the tube in nitric acid, and throw down again the orange sulphuret with sulphuretted hydrogen.

Antidotes. Vomiting, if not already present, should be excited by tickling the throat and the administration of warm water in large quantities, and even if it has taken place, warm water is adviseable to relieve the symptoms. If, notwithstanding the employment of these means, vomiting cannot be induced, we should exhibit the decoction or tincture of bark. This was proposed by Berthollet, and its value is great, from the fact of its decomposing the salt. Strong tea, the decoction of nut galls, or of astringent roots and barks generally, will answer as substitutes, when the bark cannot be obtained.

Opium may be employed in excessive vomitings, and the antiphlogistic treatment is generally necessary to remove the secondary symptoms.

THE OXIDE AND GLASS OF ANTIMONY. These substances are also poisonous, even in small doses. Hoffinan mentions fatal cases, produced by the latter, where the symptoms were similar to those caused by tartar emetic, and Morgagni quotes instances, where men and animals died from its exhibition. Inflammation of the stomach was observed on dissection.*

Both the oxide and the glass being mixed with charcoal and heated in an earthen crucible, furnish metallic antimony.

THE MURIATE (*butter of antimony*) AND SUBMURIATE OF ANTIMONY. These, like the former, are deleterious substances. Orfila quotes a case from Borrichius, where a few strong doses of the submuriate caused violent purging and vomiting, a copious salivation and extreme debility. For some time previous to death, the patient was cold as ice, his pulse was

* Morgagni, vol. 3, p. 370.

scarcely perceptible, and he breathed with difficulty. He nevertheless enjoyed all his intellectual faculties.*

ANTIMONIAL WINE. The composition and strength of this preparation vary according to the purity of the solvent, and as this is liable to alteration, a degree of insecurity attaches to its exhibition.† And I have no doubt that children have often been injured by its administration without proper advice. I will only advert to the cases quoted by Orfila from Mangetus and Fabricius Hildanus, as proofs of the dangerous and even fatal effects of this substance. Certainly the solution of tartar emetic in water is a far preferable prescription.

For each of the above compounds of antimony, the tests already advised may be used.

ANTIMONIAL VAPOURS. Fourcroy (says Orfila) relates that he has seen fifty persons who were seized with a great difficulty of breathing, tightness of the chest, and a dry cough, gripings and purging, ten or twelve hours after having respired the vapours of sulphuret of antimony, which had been detonated with nitre. The prolonged action of these might undoubtedly lead to serious evils.

COPPER.

The preparations of this metal are seldom used as the instruments of crime, but they are frequently poisonous through accident; and this is owing to the circumstance of copper being extensively employed for domestic utensils.

I shall notice, first, the nature of metallic copper, and then the action of its various compounds.

METALLIC COPPER. The weight of testimony is decidedly in favour of this not being poisonous, when perfectly pure. Orfila cites several cases from authors, where masses were swallowed, and after some time voided by the natural passages, without producing any injury. Dr. Paris mentions an instance where six copper penny pieces were taken, with a view of self destruction, and no inconvenience was experi-

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 190.

† Dr. Paris recommends that antimonial wine be struck from the list of official preparations.

enced, except the effects of mechanical obstruction. They were voided after a lapse of five years.*

It is not so certain that this substance in a state of minute division, as filings for example, is equally innocuous. Portal relates a case, where they were given to an individual labouring under ascites, and while the disease seemed to yield, colic, tenesmus and vomitings suddenly supervened.† Experiments on animals, however, with large doses of copper filings, mixed with grease or oil, have produced no injury, and on dissection, their metallic brilliancy was found untarnished.

But we have always reason to dread the effects of this metal on the human system, from the facility with which it oxidates. Copper exposed to a moist atmosphere becomes tarnished, and passes into a state of oxide, which soon after unites with the carbonic acid of the atmosphere, and forms a greenish carbonate. It dissolves in the principal mineral acids, with the aid of heat. Milk, however, although boiled for two hours in a clean kettle, did not contain any trace of copper, and the same result was obtained with tea, coffee, beer, and rain water. But if the water contained muriate of soda, it dissolved a notable portion of copper. These results were ob-

* Paris's Pharmacologia, p. 250. Dr. A. T. Thomson mentions two instances in which half pence were swallowed, and remained, the one six months and the other two months, before they were evacuated. In neither case was the health injured. (London Dispensatory, p. 273.) Dr. Corbett gives another, where a half penny was retained three months. (*Lancet*, N. S., vol. 9, p. 294.)

On the other hand, the following seem to contradict the usual results, but it is probable that these peculiarities were owing to some previous oxidation of the metal. "A child aged three years, swallowed two copper farthings by accident, at an interval of half a year after each other. After swallowing the first, he eat nothing for ten days, complained of great pain at his stomach, and drivelled as if he had been salivated. After the second, he began by degrees to lose his flesh, and had the appearance of consumption. He was, however, perfectly cured by the Bath waters." (Communication by Dr. Edward Baynard, *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 20, p. 124.)

A case is also mentioned by Dr. Jackson of Boston, where the swallowing of a half cent produced nausea and vomiting, with several other symptoms characteristic of the poison. (*New-England Journal*, vol. 8, p. 156.)

In a boy who swallowed a cent, severe vomiting followed, and in two days profuse salivation, which continued for some time. He discharged it at the end of five weeks, perfectly bright, but the soreness of the mouth remained until that time. (Case by Dr. Budd, *Coxe's Medical Museum*, vol. 2, p. 178.)

Dr. Gloninger relates a similar case, also accompanied with salivation. (*American Medical Recorder*, vol. 6, p. 593, and also Dr. Percival in his *Essays*, vol. 2, p. 221.)

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 1, p. 201.

tained by Mr. Eller, a chemist at Berlin, and he noticed a remarkable circumstance in connexion with the last one. If, instead of a simple solution of muriate of soda, (common salt) it was previously mixed with beef, bacon, and fish, the fluid resulting did not contain a trace of copper.* Fat bodies, assisted by the oxidizing principle of the atmosphere, also act with celerity on copper.

We must remark, however, that vegetable acids generally dissolve the metal with difficulty, even although assisted by heat. And hence the boiling of sugar or syrups in vessels of this metal does not of itself produce any noxious compound, unless it be, left to cool in them. In the latter case, the boiled substance acquires a bad taste and a green colour, and the copper forms an oxide on its surface.

These facts are sufficient to prove the necessity in all cases, of tinning vessels intended for the preparation of articles of food. Numberless causes (says Proust,) unite to accelerate the dissolution of the copper, since the juices of all viands are fat, acid, and naturally saline. It is therefore evident, that tinning is indispensable for kitchen utensils.† And this author has also shown another advantage arising from this precaution. The usual alloy applied in tinning vessels, consists of equal parts of tin and lead, and the tin being more oxidizable than the lead, is exclusively dissolved by any vegetable acid that may be contained in the viands, and thus prevents the latter from being attacked. These compounds of tin are known to be harmless.‡

Copper and bell-metal mortars are evidently hazardous, for

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 202. Sir Humphrey Davy, in his investigations on the preservation of the copper sheathing of ships, makes the following remark: "Weak solutions of salt act strongly on copper, strong ones, as brine, do not affect it; and the reason seems to be, that they contain little or no atmospheric air, the oxygen of which seems necessary to give the electro-positive power to menstria of that class. (Annals of Philosophy, N. S., vol. 9, p. 299.)"

† Cleanliness, may, however, ward off any formidable injury. "In the orphan house at Halle, from 600 to 900 persons daily eat food dressed in large copper kettles, and yet I never heard there of any bad effects from them: here, however, I must observe, that the cleanliness was quite exemplary; that in the afternoon we observed, with pleasure and admiration, the kitchen perfectly clean and the copper vessels bright." (Michaelis's Commentaries, vol. 3, p. 338.)

‡ Mr. Proust's papers on *Tinning*, which appeared originally in the *Annales de Chimie and Journal de Physique*, I have consulted in the Repertory of Arts, second series, volumes 6 and 9.

similar reasons, in the office of the apothecary. Not only will moisture affect them, but also many articles of the *materia medica*, and thus a dangerous compound may result.*

OXIDE AND CARBONATE OF COPPER. The carbonate (natural verdigris) forms spontaneously on the surface of copper or brass vessels, pieces of coin, &c. when treated with ammonia or water, and is of a green colour. The oxide is of a blackish brown colour. Both of them are highly poisonous, and colic and vomiting are their usual symptoms.

From the remarks made in the previous section, it will be readily understood why copper utensils, when not properly cleaned, contaminate acid substances boiled in them. Vinegar dissolves the oxide with ease, as does also ammonia. Eller has proved that wine dissolves copper, doubtless in consequence of the acetic acid contained in it, and the oxidation of the metal by the air;† and we can explain in the same way, the production of the acetate in the cocks of the vessels from which wine, beer or cider is drawn. “Drouard was affected for three days with colic and diarrhœa, in consequence of eating a ragout which had been seasoned with wine drawn out of a cask, the cock of which contained acetate of copper, which this liquor had in part dissolved.” Fat bodies, such as fixed and essential oils, &c. dissolve the oxide and carbonate of copper with readiness; and hence Proust very justly condemns the use of copper measures for oil.‡

The tests of these compounds are similar to those of verdigris, which we shall now notice.

VERDIGRIS. The compound substance known under this name, is the preparation of copper which most frequently produces deleterious effects. Orfila has collected numerous cases

* There is a useful paper on this subject in the *Medical Commentaries*, vol. 7, p. 311. The author first shows that bell-metal mortars are liable to abrasion, and that thus the particles may be united with medicines; and next, that some substances will act chemically on them.

† Moseley relates, that in 1592, at a meeting of the great senate of Bern, the wine was put into copper vessels, and suspended in a well in order to cool it. In a few days, the legates and others who had drank, were seized with violent pain in the abdomen, fever and dysentery, and many died. (*Moseley on Tropical Diseases*, p. 331.)

‡ Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 1, p. 203 to 206. In several cities in Europe, distillers, apothecaries and others, are forbidden to use copper vessels unless they are tinned. (*Ehrmann in Schlegel*, vol. 3, p. 230.)

illustrating its action, and I conceive it will be useful to state the mode in which the respective individuals were poisoned. In one instance, a family consisting of nine persons were affected; the first of these by a cake made with melted butter, and skimmed with an instrument of copper, upon which the fat body had been allowed to cool; five from some broth and meat coming out of a saucepan, skimmed by the same skimmer; and the remainder by a fricassee of pigeons, prepared in the same pan. The Jacobin friars in Paris, to the number of twenty-one, were poisoned in 1781, by eating some ray which had been cooked in a copper vessel. The cook, after taking out a part of the water, had poured vinegar on the fish to render them more firm, and in this state they had stood for some time away from the fire. Some veal placed in an earthen pot, to which there was a copper lid, and which laid directly on the meat, affected two individuals. So also eggs prepared with sorrel and butter in a copper vessel, which was covered with verdigris. Dupuytren mentions a case where a whole family was poisoned from eating lobsters, which had been cooked, and afterwards placed in a copper kettle, with vinegar poured over them. Even pease which remained for a day in the copper vessel, have produced all the characteristic effects of poisoning from copper.*

* *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 1, p. 153, quoted from a French medical journal. For similar cases, see *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, vol. 2, p. 146. Case by Mr. Ramsay, of a number of men on board the *Vestal* frigate in 1757, taken suddenly ill, with convulsions and delirium, pain and suffused eyes. Also of a boy, violently attacked from eating pease that had remained a day in a copper vessel.

Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 3, p. 438. An enumeration of various cases of food thus becoming poisonous.

Percival's Essays, vol. 2, p. 221. A female ate three or four ounces of pickled samphire. A rash appeared in the evening, which disappeared on the next day. To this succeeded pain, thirst, costiveness, vomiting, hiccup. The discharges were extremely offensive, and the abdomen tender to the touch; the hiccup became almost incessant. Various remedies were given without benefit, and she died on the tenth day. Dr. Percival states that he has seen similar severe sufferings, but which did not prove fatal, in a young man, a brass-founder, who drank water out of an old teakettle, the inside of which was covered with verdigris.

Annals of Medicine, vol. 7, p. 401. Case by Dr. Yeats, of poisoning from eating pickled salmon seasoned with vinegar. The eyes were much affected in these individuals, and dimness of sight was followed by dilated pupils.

London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 2, p. 93. Case quoted from Mr. Swan, of illness from eating hashed hare, that had stood in a brass pan.

Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 2, p. 305. Case by Dr. Higginson: A large family poisoned with milk. In two hours after taking it, they were all seized with nausea and vomiting; proper remedies, however, soon relieved them. Dr.

Verdigris itself is also sometimes used as the instrument of suicide. A lace-worker at Paris put eight *sous* pieces in a glass of strong vinegar, and left them there for seven days. At 2 p. m. having made a good dinner, he drank first one half, and in fifteen minutes after, the remainder of the potion. Not content with this, he washed the coins in more vinegar, brandy and anise-seed water, all of which he swallowed. Three hours afterwards, he was found insensible. The muscles were violently convulsed; the teeth set; the breathing interrupted; the pulse small, hard, and very slow; the pit of the stomach tender on pressure. He recovered his senses in half an hour, and then told what he had swallowed. Whites of eggs were immediately given in large quantities. The convulsions now ceased rapidly, but the hiccup continued for many hours. Next day, the abdomen was very painful; pulse full, slow and intermitting; the convulsions partial and transient. Leeches were used, and the whites of eggs continued. In the evening, he had colic, hiccup, and a contracted pulse, but gradually recovered from this, and went on improving until the fourteenth day, when he was dismissed cured.*

It is not necessary further to copy the detail of any particular case, since the leading symptoms in all, are generally very similar. They are thus stated by Orfila: "An acrid, styptic, coppery taste in the mouth, parched and dry tongue; a sense of strangulation in the throat, coppery eructations, continual spitting, nausea, copious vomitings, or vain efforts to vomit, shooting pains in the stomach, which are often very severe; horrible gripes, very frequent alvine evacuations, sometimes bloody and blackish, with tenesmus and debility; the abdomen inflated and painful; the pulse small, irregular, tight and frequent; syncope, heat of skin, ardent thirst, difficulty of breathing, anxiety about the præcordia, cold sweats,

Charles T. Jackson analyzed the milk, and found subacetate of copper in it.

Medical Facts and Observations, vol. I, p. 61. Case by Mr. Davidson, of a mother and four children suffering under an extensive cutaneous eruption, probably from dining on pease soup which was distributed with a ladle that had been long out of use, and was quite green.

Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 10, p. 84.

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 220, from Revue Médicale. Another case is quoted by Meizger, from Pyl, p. 396. The verdigris was found in the pylorus, and it had tinged the fecal matter.

scanty urine, violent headach, vertigo, faintness, weakness in the limbs, cramps of the legs, and convulsions." All these, however, do not generally occur in the same individual, but vomiting and colic are very constant.

Gangrene sometimes takes place in the intestines, and this disease is then accompanied with its usual premonitory appearances.

Sulphate of copper. (Blue vitriol.) "The most dreadful case of convulsions I ever saw (says Dr. Percival) were produced by blue vitriol, on a young woman who swallowed about two drachms of it in a fit of desperation. By evacuants, demulcents, and such absorbents as have the power of decomposing the metallic salts, she happily recovered. In the interval of her fits, she was perfectly rational."*

Appearances on dissection. If death takes place very rapidly, it is probable that few, if any, diseased appearances will be observed. Such at least was the case with animals.

In protracted cases the alimentary canal is the organ principally diseased. The mucous lining of the stomach and intestines, is found to be inflamed and gangrenous, and this extends even to the rectum. In one instance, that intestine was found pierced at two points. Sometimes the inflammation extends to all the coats, and sloughs are formed, which leave openings through which their contents pass out, and are effused into the cavity of the abdomen.† Metzger remarks, that the green colour of the salt tinges all the fluids contained in the primæ viæ.‡ Inflammation of the brain has occasionally been noticed.§

Effect on animals. The experiments of Drouard on dogs, led him to the conclusion, that verdigris acts immediately on the alimentary canal, in which it excites inflammation, without being taken up into the circulation by the lymphatic vessels. To a young dog twelve grains were given, which produced death in twenty-two hours. The stomach was found

* Percival, Essays, vol. 2, p. 221. The sulphuret of copper would seem, according to the experiments of Orfila, to be innocuous.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 224. Christison, p. 422. The skin was yellow in several cases related by Pyl and Wilberg.

‡ Metzger, p. 131.

§ Male, p. 147.

inflamed, and exhibited a black spot, which might have been taken for an erosion. The small intestines showed no marks of inflammation, but the rectum contained small ecchymoses, similar to those in the stomach. In another instance, the stomach and duodenum were inflamed, and the rectum natural.

When a small quantity in solution was injected into the jugular vein, death ensued in half an hour. The trachea and bronchiæ were filled with frothy mucosities, and the great vessels were distended with black and fluid blood. But in a dog who survived to the fourth day after this operation, nothing peculiar was observed either in the digestive organs or the vessels. Large doses indeed seem to produce sudden death, preceded by vomiting, convulsive motions, great insensibility and paralysis, and present at the same time but slight alterations on dissection. Orfila considers these facts as invalidating the doctrine of Drouard, and conclusive in favour of the absorption of the poison, and its action on the nervous system.

Tests. The tests of copper in solution are:

(a.) Ammonia gives a blue precipitate, but if added in excess, the precipitate redissolves, and the liquor is of a beautiful blue colour.

(b.) Sulphuretted hydrogen gas causes a brownish black precipitate, the sulphuret of copper.

(c.) Ferro-cyanate of potash gives a brown precipitate, the ferro-cyanate of copper.

(d.) A clean plate of iron held in a solution of sulphate of copper, becomes covered in a few hours with a red, powdery crust, which is the copper in a metallic state. The blue colour of the solution grows first green and then red. A sulphate of iron has been formed in it.

(e.) Caustic potash precipitate it of a sky blue colour, the hydrated peroxide of copper.

(f.) Oxide of arsenic, with the previous addition of a few drops of ammonia, gives a fine apple green precipitate, the arseniate of copper, or Scheele's green.*

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 206; Christison, p. 402. A very delicate process or the detection of copper has recently been announced by M. Boutigny. It consists

The following are mentioned by Orfila as the effect of animal and vegetable substances on it. The infusion of tea decomposes the solution of the acetate of copper, and a flaky precipitate of a reddish yellow colour is produced. If one part of a concentrated solution of verdigris be added to ten parts of red wine, the liquor preserves its transparency, and the hydro-sulphurets give a black precipitate; the prussiate of potash, a brown, and ammonia a very dark brown. Seven parts of the solution of verdigris and ten of wine, furnish a fluid, with which the above agents produce similar results, except that the precipitate from the ammonia is of a black colour. It readily follows from these, that this alkali is of no use in detecting verdigris if it has been mixed with wine.

If albumen be poured upon the acetate of copper, a bluish coloured precipitate will be obtained. Gelatine produces no effect, whatever may be the temperature of the mixture, and the tests act exactly as if the acetate of copper were alone. Broth furnishes no precipitate, but milk is coagulated by a large quantity of the solution of verdigris, and the coagulum when properly washed, is of a deep green colour. Sugar by trituration with verdigris, renders it nearly insoluble in cold water.

In cases where copper is mixed with animal and vegetable substances, Dr. Christison advises that the suspected matter be first boiled in acetic acid, and then filtered. What remains on the filter is to be washed and dried. Test the fluid portion with sulphuretted hydrogen, and boil it to expel the excess of gas. If copper be present, the brownish black precipitate will be thrown down. This on being dried and burnt, may be converted into the sulphate by the action of a few drops of nitric acid, aided by heat. Test this with ammonia.

in suspending by means of a hair, the half of a fine needle in the midst of the suspected liquid, previously acidulated with sulphuric acid. The apparatus thus disposed, is placed under a bell glass, and allowed to stand for several days. Air bubbles are found to form on the needle, which gradually burst, and in a few days the copper, if any be present, is precipitated on the steel. The oxide of iron is dissolved in the sulphuric acid, and forms sulphate of iron, which remains in solution. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 40, p. 488. Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 9, p. 228.

The insoluble portion should be heated to redness in a crucible till it is completely charred. The copper is reduced to a metallic state, and may be treated with nitric acid, and the liquid tests then applied.

In certain cases, however, no vestige of the poison can be detected, from its having been vomited up during life. Orfila recommends that we should then scrape off the mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines, dry it and submit it to the action of strong heat in a crucible. He has twice, he observes, obtained metallic copper by calcining in this manner a portion of the membranes of two dogs, poisoned by verdigris, and this effect particularly takes place when the mucous membrane is of a bluish colour, hard and strongly adhering to the substance of the stomach.*

In Dr. Higginson's case, a lancet blade dipped in a solution of the poisoned milk, and to which a drop of nitric acid had been added to separate the curd and albumen, was immediately covered with a coating of metallic copper.

Dr. Jackson next evaporated a portion of the milk to a spongy mass, and then burnt it in a platina crucible. The ashes were treated with nitric acid. On adding ammonia, a fine blue colour without precipitate appeared. In another portion of the same, a rod of polished iron was left over night, and the next morning half a grain of metallic copper was scraped from it.

In consequence of some excitement in Flanders and France, relative to the use of sulphate of copper by bakers in making bread, various analyses have been instituted of different vegetable and animal substances, and it is remarkable that several chemists have detected the presence of copper in many of these. Meissner showed that this metal exists in small quantity in many kinds of grain, and hence that its detection in them is not certainly, or at least always, a proof of adulteration.

Sarzean asserts that he has found traces of it in two hundred species of vegetables, and that it exists in gelatine and in butcher's meat in the proportion of one grain to every fif-

* Vol. 1, p. 231.

teen pounds. The quantity in all of these is, however, so minute as scarcely to be considered a serious objection to the conclusiveness of an ordinary medico-legal analysis.*

Besides the adulteration of bread, sugar plums and other articles of confectionary (*bonbons*) have been largely coloured with the salts of copper, and in consequence, serious disease, and even death have followed from eating them. Arsenite of copper, (Scheele's green) sulphate of copper and chromate of lead, have each been detected by chemists.†

Antidotes. The investigation of M. Marcelin Duval, and the earlier experiments of Orfila, seemed to prove that *sugar* was the antidote for verdigris. It allayed the pain and other alarming symptoms, and produced a great number of liquid stools. Subsequent researches have however diminished the value of this substance. It is useful in calming the irritation, when the poison has been expelled by vomiting, but it exerts no chemical action on it, and animals in whom the œsophagus was tied, died, notwithstanding large doses of syrup were administered. When *albumen* was given under similar circumstances, the animal survived several days, experienced no remarkable change, and after death no lesion was found.‡ It is hence the proper antidote, while sugar and its preparations may be used to aid its operation.

Drs. Mylne Edwards and Dumas, have also found, in their experiments on animals, that metallic iron is a good antidote. When fifteen, twenty, and even fifty grains of sulphate of copper, acetate of copper, or verdigris, were given to ani-

* British Association, 2d report, p. 482. Christison, p. 415. Boutigny is of opinion, that in the case of vegetables, copper will be found in them only when it is contained in the soil in which they grow. Hence its presence may be considered not as the result of the act of vegetation, but only of absorption. (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 40, p. 489.)

† *Annales d'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 420, vol. 9, p. 396, vol. 10, p. 183.

‡ Orfila, vol. 1, p. 466. Postel has made some comparative experiments with sugar and albumen, and found that the chances of recovery were as three to two in favour of sugar. He therefore deems it an antidote, and considers it capable of decomposing acetate of copper at the ordinary temperature of the atmosphere—more rapidly, however, at the boiling temperature. (*Annales d'Hygiène*, vol. 10, p. 207; *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 22, p. 528.)

A case is recorded in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 1, p. 153, where sugar apparently saved the life of the patient. After the second draught of sugar and water and whites of eggs, the vomitings and epigastric pains ceased: he fell asleep and awoke quite well.

mals, and an ounce of iron filings administered, either immediately before or immediately afterwards, the gullet being tied to prevent the discharge of the poison, death did not ensue for five, six, or even eight days, and consequently proceeded from the operation on the gullet; and in one experiment, on the ligature being removed from the gullet, the opening healed up, and complete recovery took place.*

The ferrocyanate of potash is also recommended by Dr. O'Shaughnessy as an antidote, from its powers of decomposition.†

The use of vinegar should, in cases of poisoning, be strictly interdicted, since it must prove injurious from its solvent power over the salts of copper.

Should any inflammatory symptoms remain after the presumed evacuation of the poison, they should be treated like gastritis, and opium and antispasmodics may be indicated for the spasmodic affections that are apt to remain.

ZINC.

The *sulphate of zinc*, from its frequent use in medicine, may, by accident, be taken in improper doses. Its property, however, of readily exciting vomiting, will prevent in most cases, any very serious consequences. In the experiments of Orfila, he found that when given to dogs in large doses, it caused frequent vomitings, but they recovered in a short time. When, however, a solution of it was injected into the jugular vein, violent and often ineffectual attempts were made to vomit, and death followed in a few minutes. So also when the œsophagus was tied. The animal died on the third day, and on dissection the mucous membrane of the stomach was found of a deep red colour throughout its whole extent, and black spots were occasionally seen upon the muscular coat from extravasated blood. The lungs were less crepitating than usual, and their colour was rather dark.

Cases are also recorded of its effects on the human system. In a female, who by accident drank down a solution of two ounces, it produced an excessively astringent taste, a con-

* Christison, p. 424; Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 9, p. 611.

† Lancet, N. S., vol. 7, p. 838.

traction about the throat, burning heat at the stomach, cold extremities, pale countenance, and convulsive pulse. Vomiting, however, soon intervened, and by the aid of proper remedies, the consequent irritation of the nervous system was subdued. In another case, violent pain in the epigastric region came on, and was succeeded by vomitings and continual stools. These gradually diminished, and he recovered.*

From these cases we may consider the following as the chain of symptoms which will result from taking this salt in large doses: "an astringent taste, sense of strangulation, nausea, copious vomitings, frequent stools, pains in the epigastric region, extending afterwards over the whole of the abdomen, difficulty of breathing, frequency of pulse, paleness of the countenance, and coldness of the extremities."

Appearances on dissection. In an unequivocal case of poisoning by it, Mertzdorff found the stomach and intestines, but particularly the latter, contracted, the inner membrane of the stomach grayish green, with several spots of effused blood, and greenish fluid contents, and the inner membrane of the small intestines similarly spotted; the rest of the body quite natural. He detected the poison by chemical tests, not only in the contents, but likewise in the coats of the stomach and intestines.†

Chemical proofs. Sulphate of zinc is very soluble. As usually sold in the shops, it is often very far from pure, having an admixture of the sulphate of iron. This greatly modifies the action of the tests, and it will therefore be necessary to mention their effects, both on the pure and the impure substance.

(a.) The caustic alkalies, when added to the pure salt, throw down a white precipitate, (oxide) which is soluble in an excess of ammonia; when added to the impure, a greenish white precipitate. Carbonate of ammonia also precipitates the pure salt white, the impure, grayish white.

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 270, "A female partook accidentally and very moderately of a cake impregnated with white vitriol, which had been prepared for the destruction of an old man. He was seized with violent vomiting, but the woman died." (Metzger, p. 396.)

† Christison, p. 452.

(b.) The prussiate of potash causes a white precipitate in the pure, and in the impure a deep blue one.

(c.) Sulphuretted hydrogen, a white precipitate in the pure and impure.

Tincture of galls may be used as a preliminary test, to ascertain the presence of iron; it merely renders the pure salt hazy, but gives a deep violet coagulum in the other.

When the sulphate is mixed with animal and vegetable substances, Dr. Christison advises that it be acidulated with acetic acid and filtered. The fluid is then evaporated and treated with sulphuretted hydrogen gas. Expel the excess of gas by boiling, and wash and collect the precipitate. It is then to be dried and heated to redness in a tube. When cool, add nitric acid to it, which acts on the zinc, and leaves the sulphur. The nitrous solution must now be diluted and neutralized with carbonate of ammonia, after which the liquid tests will act on it.*

Treatment. We should endeavor to promote vomiting by administering warm water and emollient drinks. Milk is particularly proper, from its power of decomposing the sulphate. We must guard against the approach of inflammation, and allay irritation by anodynes.

Oxide of zinc. This can hardly be considered a very deleterious substance. In large doses, it produced vomiting in animals, and probably would have the same effect on the human system.†

It is a problem of considerable interest, whether *metallic zinc* is a safe substance for domestic utensils. It has been repeatedly recommended for this purpose, by individuals on the continent of Europe, but the examinations made by chemists are decidedly unfavourable to it. Proust suggests several objections with reference to its manufacture, such as the effect

* Christison, p. 447. Orfila, in his last edition, recognizes the variety of effects produced by tests on the pure and impure salt. He only stated the latter (which I copied) in the first.

† Dr. M. Wendell relates a case where a female took by mistake for magnesia, thirty grains, two or three times a day, for a fortnight, without any effect, except a slight constriction of the fauces immediately after swallowing the dose. (Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 4, p. 247.) Riel's experiments on animals with the oxide, are mentioned in the *Annals of Medicine*, vol. 1, p. 171.

of heat on it and the difficulty of soldering; but the most important is its facility of oxidation. The atmosphere alone produces this effect, while vinegar dissolves it and forms an acetate.* Several commissions have been appointed in France to examine into the propriety of employing this metal. Vauquelin and Deyeux, reported to the medical faculty of Paris, that water, when suffered to remain in vessels of zinc, decomposed it, and produced a white oxide. Vinegar caused an acetate, which was ascertained by reagents. Citron juice and sorrel, each produced on boiling, their respective compounds with the metal. Muriate of soda in solution furnished a liquor which gave a precipitate of oxide of zinc. Lastly, butter heated in a sauce-pan of zinc, destroyed the polish of the vessel, and there was even formed by the heat a small hole in the bottom of it. It is therefore impossible, (they remark,) to employ it for kitchen utensils, without incurring the hazard of its being united, either in the state of oxide or salt, with domestic viands.†

The French Institute also appointed a committee, at the request of the ministers of the interior and of war, to inquire into the propriety of its use for the fabrication of measures for liquids, and for vessels and utensils for the use of military hospitals. It consisted of Portal, Berthollet, Deyeux, Vauquelin and Guyton Morveau. They repeated several of the previous experiments with similar results. Even distilled water, heated in a sand bath, dissolved part of the zinc, and formed a hydrate, which possessed a distinct metallic taste.

The commission remark, that although the oxide itself may not be dangerous, yet if zinc vessels be used for domestic purposes, we shall have a variety of salts produced from the numerous ingredients that are employed for food. And it is impossible that these can be healthy; nor indeed can it be otherwise but that some will prove noxious. They therefore advise against the adoption of this metal.‡

* See Proust's paper, already quoted.

† Repertory of Arts, second series, vol. 23, p. 178.

‡ Repertory of Arts, second series, vol. 25, p. 247, 313. A third report was made sometime previous by Chaussier, Gay-Lussac and Thenard, on the question whether canteens of plated zinc were advisable for the French armies. They state among other

With this information on the subject, it is somewhat astonishing that the proposition should be entertained, of using vessels made of zinc in dairies. Yet an individual proposed to the London Society of Arts, to employ them for obtaining cream from milk. He allows from his own experiments, that milk subjected to this process, is more or less impregnated with the soluble salts of zinc. When asked by the committee of the society, what he had done with the milk after the separation of the cream, he replied, that he employed it wholly in feeding pigs, and that they thrived under it.*

In this country, great efforts have also been made of late years to introduce zinc pans into our dairies. I do not, however, hear of pigs, and it is very probable that the impure milk is distributed for human use. If we cannot call it poisonous, it is at least unhealthy, and should be forbidden.

TIN.

In its metallic state, this substance is not poisonous; but a preparation much used in the arts, is highly deleterious, viz:

THE HYDROCHLORATE OF TIN.† Three quarters of a grain dissolved in two drachms of water, and injected into the jugular vein of a small dog, produced a species of catalepsy, which gradually passed into complete paralysis and insensibility, and death followed in twelve hours after the application. Two grains injected in a similar way, destroyed the animal in fifteen minutes—tetanic convulsions preceded the termination. Lastly, six grains caused vertigo and death in one minute after the injection. On dissection, the lungs were found more or less shrivelled, and partially gorged with blood; the blood itself was dark-coloured, and there was a slight redness of the

results, that common wine, vinegar and even mixtures of vinegar and water, dissolve the metal and give out hydrogen. The plating of zinc vessels internally with tin has been attempted, but it was abandoned, from the acrid and disagreeable flavour given to the meat, and they add, that tin does not appear capable of coating zinc in such a manner as to guard it against the action of acids. Lastly, plates of zinc when soldered together, have too little solidity, and are apt to give way. They therefore gave a decided opinion against the introduction of either plated zinc or tinned zinc, for the above purposes. (*New-York Medical Repository*, vol. 17, p. 88.)

* Method of obtaining cream from milk by George Carter, Esq. (*Repertory of Patent Inventions*, vol. 15, p. 233.)

† There are two hydrochlorates (muriates) of tin. The protomuriate and permuriate.

mucous membrane of the stomach and duodenum. When muriate of tin was introduced into the stomach, it excited violent vomiting and death, without convulsions or paralysis. The mucous membrane of the stomach, on examination, appeared of a dark-red colour, was hardened, horny, and as it were, tanned. It was also ulcerated in various parts, and the intestinal canal contained much black, thick, ropy bile. The lungs were sound.

There are no cases on record, I believe, of death being produced on the human subject by the use of this substance, but from a narrative given by Orfila, as to the effect of a small quantity taken by accident in food, it is evident that it may prove highly deleterious. Colic was produced in all the individuals, and diarrhœa accompanied this in two of them.

Among its *tests* are the following:

(a.) The addition of corrosive sublimate in solution, produces a white precipitate.

(b.) The muriate of gold, a purple precipitate.

(c.) The hydro-sulphurets render it turbid, and separate from it a blackish powder.

(d.) The prussiate of potash causes a white precipitate, which soon becomes blue on exposure to the air.

The action of the muriate of tin on animal and vegetable fluids, is very distinct and powerful.

A strong infusion of tea, and the infusion of gallnuts in alcohol, give an abundant precipitate of a clear yellow colour. A small quantity of the muriate dropped into Burgundy wine, produces a violet coloured sediment. Albumen precipitates it of a white colour. Gelatine decomposes it, and produces a white, flaky precipitate. Milk is converted by a few drops into thick curds, which, on being dried, are of a yellow colour, and friable. Human bile added to it, produces flaky curds.

Simple syrup (water saturated with sugar) seems to be the only substance that does not occasion any change in the solution.

These results invalidate the importance of tests, and it is therefore proper in all cases, according to Orfila, to dry the precipitates, and calcine them in a crucible with caustic potash. Metallic tin will be produced.

Antidote. It is evident from the experiments of Orfila, that *milk* acts as an antidote to this poison. It is completely coagulated, and the coagulum contains muriatic acid and oxide of tin, and is not deleterious. The antiphlogistic treatment may be subsequently necessary, if symptoms of inflammation supervene.*

The *oxide of tin* has also proved destructive to animals who have been made to swallow it.

SILVER.

NITRATE OF SILVER. (*Lunar caustic.*) A small quantity of this salt in solution, injected into the jugular, produced difficult respiration, the appearance of suffocation, efforts to vomit, pain, convulsions and death. On dissection, the lungs were seen of a rose colour, the heart was distended with blood, and in one instance, the mucous membrane of the duodenum was of a bright cherry red. When the œsophagus was tied to prevent vomiting, and twelve grains in the solid form were introduced into the stomach, death followed in six days, without any previous symptoms, except debility, intense thirst, and frequency of pulse. The mucous membrane was perforated in a number of places, with small scars, of the size of a pin's head. The lungs were, however, sound. Again, twenty grains in solution were administered to a dog, and produced only uneasiness and dejection. On the third day thereafter, thirty-two grains more were given, which caused vomiting of a pulpy matter. Of this he again recovered. On the fifth day, the œsophagus was tied and thirty-six grains introduced. It was followed by excruciating pain, and he died on the night of the succeeding day. The examination after death presented the mucous membrane of the stomach dissolved into a pulp, and eschars of a grayish white colour were seen near the pylorus. The muscular coat was inflamed, but the lungs were healthy.

There are but few instances on record of injury done by the nitrate of silver to the human subject. Orfila relates from Boerhaave, that a student of pharmacy swallowed some lunar

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 247 to 261.

caustic, and excruciating pains, gangrene and sphacelus were the consequences; and Metzger alludes to a case, where the most imminent danger followed, from a surgeon letting a piece drop into the throat of a patient, whose ulcers he was touching with it.* It effects on the skin, are an illustration of its probable operation on the throat, stomach, &c.†

Tests. (a.) When thrown on burning charcoal, it is decomposed. Vapours of nitrous gas are given out, and the metallic silver remains upon the charcoal.

(b.) The solution stains the skin black.

(c.) Muriatic acid and the soluble muriates precipitate the corneous muriate of silver, which is white and curdled.

(d.) Potash, soda and lime-water produce a deep brown precipitate.

(e.) Ammonia when added to a solution of nitrate of silver, forms ammoniac of silver, and in consequence of the solubility of this new product, the solution is not disturbed; but if the solution of oxide of arsenic be now thrown in, a lively yellow precipitate is produced, which on exposure to the air becomes brown.

(f.) The hydrosulphates give a black sediment.

(g.) Phosphate of soda produces a yellow precipitate.

(h.) Prussiate of potash, a white precipitate.

Of these, *c* and *e* are the best tests.

As to the effects of nitrate of silver on animal or vegetable substances, the following may be noticed:

The alcoholic solution of gall-nuts produces no change.

If ten parts of Burgundy wine be added to one of a solution of nitrate of silver, the fluids become slightly turbid and acquire a violet colour. The muriatic acid produces a white precipitate of this mixture, the hydro-sulphurets a greenish brown, and the phosphate of soda violet blue.‡

When fifteen parts of an infusion of tea are added to two

* Metzger, p. 397.

† It is a habit among the apothecaries of France to keep the fused nitrate of silver in linseed. Dulong has shown that they act on each other, and Deyeux saw a case in which death was produced by the internal use of linseed in which the nitrate had been kept. (North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 200.)

‡ Chlorine will not answer here as a decolorizing application, since it decomposes the nitrate. Orfila, London Medical Repository, vol. 14, p. 509.

parts of a solution of nitrate of silver, a flaky precipitate occurs of a deep purple-red, bordering a little on black. When one part of nitrate of silver was employed, the mixture was of a yellow colour, but passed first to a red and then to a black colour, without affecting its transparency. In this state, muriatic acid gave a yellow sediment.

Albumen gives a copious white precipitate, broth a yellowish-white one, and bile an orange-yellow one. Gelatine causes no change. Milk is coagulated; a formation takes place of small white curds, and the fluid becomes transparent.

Antidote. Muriate of soda appears from the experiments of Orfila to counteract the effects of nitrate of silver. It produces an insoluble chloride, which has no power on the system. Hence salt water, aided by emollient and mucilaginous drinks is advisable.*

FULMINATING SILVER, according to the experiments of M. Pagot Laforet, also acts as a violent poison on animals in small doses. But if charcoal, mixed with water, was administered in quantity immediately after the exhibition of the poison, the symptoms ceased and no further injury was sustained.†

GOLD.

NITRO-MURIATE (HYDROCHLORATE, now called CHLORIDE) OF GOLD, injected into the jugular of animals, produced death apparently by causing suffocation. The succession of symptoms were vertigo, deep respiration, plaintive cries, and occasionally vomiting. They expired in a few minutes after the operation. On dissection, the lungs were seen gorged with blood; the heart was full of black blood, but the mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines was sound.

Death also followed from taking this substance into the stomach; and the mucous membrane was, on dissection, found abraded in several places.

We have no cases on record of poisoning by this salt, but it is evident from the preceding observations, and also from its effects as an article of the materia medica, that it exercises a

* Orfila. Christison.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 25, p. 457, quoted from the *Journal Général*.

powerful action on the human system. It has come within my observation, to have seen a case of dropsy removed by its use in a very short time.

Tests. (a.) When thrown on burning charcoal, it is decomposed, and converted into metallic gold, and the chlorine is given off.

(b.) It stains the skin of a purple colour.

(c.) Sulphate of iron produces a brown precipitate, and pellicles of gold are seen floating on the surface of the fluid.

(d.) Muriate of tin produces a purple precipitate.

(e.) The hydro-sulphurets cause a deep chocolate-coloured precipitate.

(f.) *The prussiate of potash produces no effect.*

Effects of animal and vegetable fluids. Muriate of gold is not affected by syrup; is precipitated reddish-yellow by tea; red, chocolate-coloured, and afterwards metallic, by tincture of galls; deep purple and metallic by Burgundy wine; yellow by albumen and gelatine; and green, passing into purple and violet, by bile. It also instantly curdles milk.* Chlorine decolorizes the mixture with wine, and leaves the tests to operate in their usual manner.

Antidotes. Dr. Thomson recommends the sulphate of iron for this purpose, from its property of decomposing the salt, and throwing down the gold in its metallic state.† Orfila recommends the antiphlogistic treatment generally, and in particular the use of emollient and mucilaginous drinks.

FULMINATING GOLD appears to have proved highly deleterious in several cases quoted by Orfila from Plenck and Hoffman. Vomiting, spasm, diarrhoea, faintings and death, were the consequences of the administration of a few grains, (three to six.) Rivinus mentions having found holes in the intestines of a child poisoned with it.‡

PLATINA.

Twelve grains of the hydrochlorate, when administered to a dog, destroyed it, and violent inflammation of the stomach

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 288 to 296.

† Annals of Philosophy, vol. 5, p. 385.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 297.

and intestines was produced; but when applied to a wound in the neck, no effect was produced on the general system, or on remote organs.*

The following may be a case of idiosyncrasy, but it is at all events curious. "A person has been uniformly affected with erythema of the face, during the last six or seven years, every time he opens a bottle containing the liquid nitro-muriate (chloride) of platina, within two or three feet distance, and without touching the face. The same effect is produced by opening a bottle containing dry ammonia, or oxide of platina. If the smallest particle of these substances be brought into contact with the face—even the fingers, though they be carefully wiped after touching these preparations, if they come in contact with the face, the erythema is excited. It spreads rapidly over the skin of the face, feeling very hot, itching extremely, and causing a pale rose-red colour. In two, three, or at most four hours, this slight disease disappears."†

BISMUTH.

Nitrate of bismuth, in its crystallized state, was boiled in distilled water, and the fluid afterwards filtered. When this was injected into the jugular vein, it produced retching, plaintive cries, convulsions of the limbs, palpitation, difficulty of breathing, and general depression and death. The lungs were dark-coloured, but tinged only in particular parts, or wrinkled. The left ventricle and arteries contained only a little black blood.

The *subnitrate of bismuth*, on being introduced into the stomach, produced a vomiting of white ropy matter, deep and difficult respiration, trembling of the limbs, and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was either highly inflamed or extensively ulcerated, so that the slightest friction separated it in the form of pultaceous scraps. Portions of the lungs were gorged with blood.

When the subnitrate (improperly called *white oxide*‡) of bis-

* Gmelin, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 135.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 8, p. 524.

‡ "There is no such thing as white oxide of bismuth. However much washed, the precipitate obtained by water from the nitrate of bismuth, is a sub-salt." TURNER.

muth has not been prepared with sufficient care, it often happens that violent vomiting, diarrhœa, and other unpleasant symptoms will ensue from its administration. In one case where the precipitate produced by adding water to the nitrate, did not undergo the repeated washings which are necessary, I have known it to cause the most alarming vomiting.

One fatal case is on record of poisoning by this substance. A man took two drachms by mistake. He was immediately attacked with burning in the throat, vomiting and purging, cramps and intermitting pulse; then with inflammation of the throat, and on the third day with hiccup, laborious breathing, and swelling of the hands and feet. Suppression of urine had existed from the first, and continued until near his death. This occurred on the ninth day, having been preceded by salivation, delirium, swelling of the tongue, and great enlargement of the abdomen. On dissection, every portion of the alimentary canal, from the throat to the rectum, bore marks of inflammation. The tonsils, uvula, epiglottis, &c. were gangrenous; the gullet livid; the stomach very red, with numerous purple pimples; the whole intestinal canal red, and here and there gangrenous. The inner surface of the heart was red. The kidneys and brain were healthy.*

Tests. (a.) Sulphuretted hydrogen causes a black precipitate.

(b.) The prussiate of potash, a pale yellow.

(c.) Ammonia causes a white precipitate.

(d.) The chromate of potash, a beautiful orange yellow.†

(e.) The tincture of galls, a flaky pale yellow.

(f.) On the addition of water, the fluid becomes milky, and a white precipitate gradually subsides.

(g.) The precipitates, on being calcined with charcoal in a crucible, give out the metal.

Nitrate of bismuth is precipitated pale yellow by tea, yellow by bile, and white by albumen and milk; the last is curdled by it. Gelatine is not affected. Burgundy wine gives a rose-coloured precipitate, inclining to violet. The supernatant fluid preserves the red colour of the wine; but the hydro-

* Christison, p. 444. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 34, p. 216. The case occurred in Germany.

† So also, says Dr. Cooper, does corrosive sublimate with chromate of potash.

sulphurets, on being poured into it, produce a black precipitate.* Ammonia deprives it of its colour, without occasioning any sensible white precipitate.

Antidotes. Milk, and mucilaginous drinks; and if symptoms of inflammation supervene, the antiphlogistic regimen.†

IRON.

The compounds of this substance are to be deemed among the least poisonous of the metallic salts. There is a diversity of result as to the

Sulphate of iron, (green vitriol.) In the hands of Dr. Smith, it proved an active poison. When applied in the dose of two drachms, to the cellular texture of the inside of the thigh of two dogs, it killed them in the course of twelve or fifteen hours. On dissection, the internal surface of the stomach of one of them was found covered with a multiplicity of petechial spots; the wrinkles of the rectum were numerous and black; the liver whitish, with livid spots on its convex surface; while the heart contained black grumous blood, and its ventricles had some slight livid blotches.

When introduced into the stomach in the dose of two drachms, it did not destroy life in less than twenty-six hours, and without any other apparent symptom than a general insensibility. The interior of the stomach exhibited red spots; the small intestines presented blackish puffy swellings, and the upper part of the rectum showed red folds.‡

Gmelin, on the other hand, gave it in doses of two drachms to dogs, and it caused nothing but vomiting. Forty grains had no effect on rabbits, and its injection into the veins was not deleterious.§

Muriate of iron. This is more active, owing to the excess of acid in it. Dr. Christison gives the following case, as communicated to him by Dr. Combe of Leith. A gardener took an ounce and a half of the tincture of the muriate of iron, by

* On the addition of chlorine, the mixture is rendered colourless, and the tests produce their ordinary effects. (Orfila, London Medical Repository, vol. 14. p. 409.)

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 298 to 307.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 468.

§ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 137.

mistake for whiskey. Pain and tension in the throat and stomach succeeded, with coldness; then a vomiting of an inky fluid, followed by profuse vomiting of mucus and blood, and bloody stools. He rallied under the use of remedies, and in three weeks returned to his occupation; but in two weeks more, Dr. Combe found him emaciated, cadaverous, with pain and costiveness. He died in five days after this. The pylorus was greatly thickened, with a cicatrized patch three inches long and two inches broad, and another large inflamed spot.*

LEAD.

I cannot too much impress on my readers the necessity of being well acquainted with the symptoms produced by the compounds of this metal, and the tests necessary to detect them. In the course of my remarks, it will be seen how often they have produced injurious or fatal effects from being united with very many articles of common food and drink.

The principal salts of lead are the following:

Acetate of lead. (Sugar of lead.) There is also a *sub-acetate of lead*, used most commonly as a medicinal application under the name of *Goulard's extract*. The distinction between these I shall presently notice.

As to the acetate, there are some cases on record of its effects. The following is related by Dr. Kerchhoffs. It occurred in the person of a soldier who drank a considerable quantity of the solution. He was soon seized with the most violent symptoms, indicative of gastric inflammation. A sense of suffocation, drawing in of the belly, costiveness, cold and clammy sweats, and trismus, were present. He died in great agony at the end of three days. On dissection, the lead was discovered by proper tests in the fluids of the stomach. The mucous membrane of that organ was abraded in several places, particularly near the pylorus; and the œsophagus, stomach, duodenum, mesentery, liver and spleen, were in a state of high inflammation.†

* Christison, p. 574.

† Transactions Coll. Phys. London, vol. 6, p. 39. The editors of the London Medical Intelligencer, in remarking on this case, observe that they once saw a gentleman die with similar symptoms, after swallowing about three ounces of solution given to him by a quack for an injection. (New-England Journal, vol. 10, p. 86.)

Dr. Shearman has also observed fatal effects to follow from an adulteration of gin with sugar of lead. The symptoms were, occasional violent colic pains, chiefly occurring after meals, attended with an obstinate costiveness, and although these were for a time relieved by purgatives and other means, they almost universally recurred. The progress of the disease, he observes, even in those cases where it attained its utmost violence, was in almost every instance so insidious and slow, as to leave the observer unapprehensive of its true character, which, however, was at last brought to light.*

Mr. Iliff saw a case where an ounce of the salt in solution had been swallowed through mistake. It produced vomiting and violent pain in the stomach. Sulphate of magnesia, an emetic, and subsequently the stomach pump, were used. The patient recovered, but she experienced for some days an occasional rigidity of the abdominal muscles, and costiveness.†

Instances are however stated on the other hand, where this salt in quantity has not produced any injurious effects. An apprentice of a cooper near Glasgow, had an ulcer on the tibia, accompanied with considerable inflammation, for which he was ordered a poultice with acetate of lead. As this article is much used by linen printers, he procured in an adjoining print-field, a lump, which could not have weighed less than a pound, being as he said, of the size of his fist. On coming down, he laid it on the kitchen table, and shortly after went away. His mistress, an old, short sighted woman, soon after came in with cabbage for the family dinner, laid it on the table upon the lead, without perceiving it, and cut them down with a knife. By this operation both were incorporated into one mass, and the whole was put into a pot, boiled with potatoes, and afterwards chopped together for dinner. This dish was eaten by the master and mistress, their daughter and her husband, and two apprentices. Soon after, the lad wished to prepare his poultice, but the materials could not be found. As a curious taste had been observed by all

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 213, from Transactions Medical Society of London.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 23, p. 37.

of them in their food, they became alarmed, and on examining the table, it was evident that the sugar of lead and the cabbage had been bruised together, as some of the former in a powdered state still adhered to it. Mr. Hunter of Dumbarton was immediately sent for. He gave to five of them an emetic, which operated well, and they experienced no disagreeable symptoms afterwards. The sixth person, an apprentice, refused to take any thing, as he felt no uneasiness, nor did he subsequently experience any disorder in his bowels.*

It is also within the experience of almost every physician, that large doses of this substance have been given as a medicine, without producing any primary or secondary bad effects.†

The diversity that is thus observed, has led to some inquiries and investigations concerning its cause. I will first state the result of comparative experiments on animals.

When a solution of the acetate of lead, containing from one to three grains, was injected by Orfila into the jugular of dogs, it did not appear to incommode them. Once or twice only, the animals made some slight efforts to vomit, and threw up a small quantity of whitish stringy matter. Five grains did not at first appear to produce any effect; but on the third day, the animal became dejected and refused to take food. On the fourth his gait was unsteady and difficult, his posterior extremities occasionally exhibited some convulsive movements, and he was extremely weak. He died on the fifth day, and the lungs and stomach were found healthy. Thirteen grains injected in this way, produced instant death without any signs of pain or convulsions. The blood in the left ventricle was fluid, and of a vermilion red colour.

When the acetate was taken into the stomach in a solid form, and in doses of from three drachms to an ounce or more, it excited vomiting, dejection and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was inflamed, and spots of a dark co-

* London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 9, p. 173. Case by Dr. Hunter of Dumbarton.

† See, among many others, Laidlaw's essay on the use of acetate of lead; London Medical Gazette, vol. 3, p. 721.

lour were observed on it; the intestinal canal and lungs were healthy. Its effects when given in solution, were a loss of muscular power, trembling of the limbs, and vertigo. The mucous membrane was of a gray ash colour.*

Gaspard injected acetate of lead into the veins of animals with fatal effects, and the appearances on dissection, were inflammation of the lungs and of the small intestines, but the stomach was generally sound.† Dr. Campbell is also mentioned by Dr. Christison, as having proved by experiment, that death is caused by applying it to a wound. The symptoms were similar to those noticed by Orfila, but the appearances on dissection varied in so far that Dr. Campbell found the stomach red and corrugated, and the small intestines vascular.

Lastly, Dr. Wibmer, a German physiologist, poisoned a dog with sugar of lead, given daily to the amount of two drachms and twelve grains, in the course of seventeen days. Frequent vomiting and gradually increasing weakness, and stiffness of the legs preceded death.‡

All these experiments go to show the direct poisonous effects of the acetate of lead, and at the same time to suggest that the occasional exemption from illness in some cases may be owing to accident, constitutional strength, or some fortunate state of the stomach and bowels.

Dr. A. T. Thomson has however lately presented some new views on this subject. He is of opinion that among the salts of lead, the *carbonate* is the only direct poison, and that the seemingly poisonous properties of the other salts depend upon their conversion into this. From his experiments, it appears that the subacetate§ and citrate of lead in solution, have so powerful an affinity for carbonic acid as to take it from the air; that the affinity of the acetate for this acid is comparatively weak, and that carbonic acid effects no change whatever on the nitrate, muriate, sulphate, phosphate and tartrate of lead.

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 457.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 48, p. 155, from Journal de Physiologie.

‡ Christison, p. 486, 487.

§ "The subacetate of lead, commonly called *extractum saturni*, is prepared by boiling one part of the neutral acetate and two parts of litharge, deprived of carbonic acid by heat, with 25 parts of water." (Turner's Chemistry, 5th edition, p. 799.)

Dr. Thomson next proceeded to perform some experiments on animals with the three salts convertible into the carbonate. He gave dogs to the amount of several drachms, but without any effect. None of them died. In order to explain the results obtained by Orfila, he suggests that the quantities given were so large as to produce inflammation and death, like any other non-poisonous substance when administered in excessive doses. On rabbits, the nitrate, muriate and acetate produced no effect; the subacetate slightly affected the animal, but it was alive a week after taking it. The carbonate, on the other hand, was decidedly poisonous.*

The deductions to be made from these results are not so positive or comprehensive as Dr. Thomson is inclined to put them. His experiments, I apprehend, explain very satisfactorily the diversity of effects induced by the ordinary sugar of lead. As used in commerce, and even by the druggist, it may contain the subacetate.† Other portions may be comparatively pure. And in this manner we may account for the exemption from dangerous symptoms in some cases. We can also grant that the carbonate is among the most active of the compounds of lead. But it is certainly going too far, to say that the noxious properties of the compounds of lead depend on the presence of the carbonate alone.‡

As to the use of acetate of lead as a medicine, I may be permitted to repeat a remark made in the former edition.

I have too often witnessed the value and efficacy of acetate of lead in pulmonary and uterine hæmorrhages, not to feel a great partiality for it as an astringent medicine. I know of nothing that can be substituted, in extreme cases. But I must stop here, and unequivocally condemn the practice which has

* British Association, report of the first and second meetings of, p. 594. The experiments are given in detail in the *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 10, p. 689.

† The following shows that even the subacetate may be innoxious. "During the campaign in Russia, several loaves of sugar had been enclosed in a chest containing some flasks of extract of lead. One of these flasks having been broken, the liquor escaped, and the sugar became impregnated with it. During the distresses of the campaign, it was necessary to have recourse to this sugar, but far from producing the fatal accidents which were expected, it proved a salutary article of nourishment." (*London Medical Repository*, vol. 20, p. 441.)

‡ "The theory that I have advanced, that there is only one direct poison among the salts of lead, and that the other salts become poisonous only when they are converted into that one." (Dr. Thomson in *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 10, p. 694.)

occasionally obtained of late years, of administering this salt in diarrhœa. It is not necessary at this time to point out the reasons why it must prove injurious; it is sufficient to say, that death, preceded by all the symptoms of acute poisoning, has been the consequence of its exhibition. We have the authority of my friend Dr. Mann, late hospital surgeon in the United States army, in asserting, that during the war of 1812 several officers of rank fell victims to its use.*

As the chemical proofs of all the preparations of lead are in many respects similar, we shall notice them at the conclusion of this article.

Carbonate of lead, (cerusse or white lead.) We have a remarkable case on record, of the noxious effects of this substance on the human system.

Mr. Deering, a surgeon in London, was requested on the 21st of October, 1808, to visit Mrs. R., the wife of a respectable tradesman in Aldersgate-street, who complained of violent pain in the scrobiculus cordis, with great soreness of the epigastric region when pressed upon. She had vomited a considerable quantity of bilious matter, and at the same time her bowels were constipated; the pulse was calm and regular, the tongue clean and moist, and there was no symptom of fever present. A cathartic was administered, which operated, and an opiate given in the evening. The following morning she appeared relieved; but in the evening, the pain and vomiting recurred, and these symptoms continued for some successive days, in so distressing a degree, that it was deemed advisable to consult the family physician, which was done on November 4, 1808. At this time, these symptoms continued as already intimated, without any appearance of fever, and hence the physician was induced to consider the affection as of a rheumatic and spasmodic nature.

In a few days, in consequence of the amendment of the patient, he discontinued his visits. In about a week after this period, a boy in the same family, nearly sixteen years of age, was seized with symptoms exactly similar to those of the preceding case, and similar remedies afforded only partial relief,

* New-England Journal, vol. 11, p. 19. Dr. Thomson advises that when the sugar of lead is given internally, a dilute acetic acid be added to it.

till at length he was removed into the country, and thereby recovered his health.

A week after the attack of this youth, the eldest child, a boy six years old, was also seized with analogous symptoms, and the mother having relapsed into her former state, the physician was again consulted on the 19th of November. At this time, three other persons in the family laboured under similar affections, and suspicions were now entertained that some poisonous substance might have caused this general indisposition of the family; but after minute investigation, no one circumstance was discovered to confirm this suspicion, or to elucidate the source of so extensive a calamity.

The sickness and pain continued unabated in Mrs. R., but the son, after the period of a fortnight, was deemed in a state of convalescence by his physician, who discontinued his attendance; he was, however, soon after seized with convulsions, and expired within a few hours. Unexpected and severe as this shock was, Mrs. R. afterwards gradually grew a little better. She had hitherto continued to suckle her child, which, it being fifteen months old, she was advised to wean: to this she reluctantly consented. In about ten days afterwards the child became somewhat costive, without any other apparent indisposition; but at this period it was seized with vomiting and convulsions, and suddenly expired. The unhappy parent now experienced a return of her complaints, and, under a persuasion of the inefficacy of professional aid, she was prevailed upon to consult an empiric, whose attendance, though continued to the end of the year, proved unavailing; and on the 3d of January, 1809, she had the advice of Mr. Chevalier, an experienced surgeon, who considered the patient's complaint to be chronic rheumatism; and by the use of clysters of warm water, oily mucilaginous medicines, fomentations and vesicatories, she appeared to experience more relief than at any period since the first attack; but although the vomiting and sickness were less violent and frequent, the pain and soreness of the abdomen, first complained of, never entirely subsided: she was, however, able to sit up and amuse herself with a little needlework, and to go about

the domestic concerns of the family, and Mr. Chevalier had proposed to pay his final visit on the 21st. On the morning of this day she rose at ten o'clock, and within the space of an hour afterwards, whilst standing near the desk of drawers, she suddenly exclaimed, "I am dying!" She was seized with convulsions, which continued till five o'clock in the afternoon, when she expired.

On the subsequent day, Mr. Chevalier, whose anatomical skill is well known, examined the body by dissection. Neither the thoracic and abdominal viscera, nor the brain, upon the most minute examination, exhibited the least appearance of disease; in short, not the least trace could be discovered of any morbid affection.

With respect to the three other persons already mentioned to have been indisposed, the servant maid, one of them, was conveyed to her friends, and recovered. A sister-in-law of Mrs. R. also recovered; but the third, who was her mother-in-law, died, after lingering under disease till March.

These circumstances having been cursorily communicated to the medical society, Dr. Adams, Dr. Hamilton, and Mr. Lawrence, were requested to visit the house of this unfortunate family, and to endeavor to ascertain the cause of the calamity. Every culinary article, and the whole premises were accurately examined, but without its leading to any discovery.

It appeared, indeed that Mr. R., the husband of the deceased lady, had purchased a cask of sugar at a sale, a considerable part of which had been disposed of to some friends in the country, who had used it without inconvenience, and hence no suspicion was entertained of this article having produced the fatality in Mr. R's family.

In this state of uncertainty, Dr. Laird, another member of the medical society, visited the house; and, on examining the cask which had contained the sugar, he observed a white powder adhering to its inner surface, and which, on being heated by the blow pipe on charcoal, afforded globules of lead in the metallic state.

The mystery was thus at length developed. The sugar had been injudiciously put into a cask which had previously

contained white lead. That part of the sugar which was sent into the country had probably been taken out of the middle of the cask, and had never come in contact with the lead; whilst that which was used by the family, having been taken from the side, was impregnated with this metal, and doubtless was the source of the fatal events described.

Of nine persons in this family, who were more or less indisposed, four died, and the effects of the poison appear to have been nearly in the ratio of their respective ages.

The infant, fifteen months old, was attacked and expired within the space of twenty-four hours; the child, six years of age, survived a fortnight; Mrs. R. aged forty, lingered three months before the fatal event took place; and the mother-in-law, aged sixty-seven, died four months after the attack.

The symptoms in each were very similar. The vomiting, pain in the stomach and costiveness, marked the attack of the disease; and the soreness of the epigastric region in those who recovered, was not removed by medicine, but seemed rather gradually to wear away by time or change of air. The matter vomited was usually of a dark-yellow colour, though sometimes green; the fæces were in general dark coloured; but in the case of Mrs. R. they were completely white during the space of twenty-four hours only.

There was a considerable sameness in the medical treatment. The opiates which were given afforded no mitigation of the symptoms, unless joined with cathartics, and aided by fomentations, &c. The countenances of all the patients exhibited a pale, sickly, wan aspect. The pulse in each was slow and regular, rather indeed sluggish, and generally below the natural state; but in no instance were there any symptoms of paralysis.*

I have given the details of this case because it is a most instructive one to the practitioner, as well as the medical jurist. Other instances of the poisonous effects of the carbonate of lead mixed with sugar have occurred in our own country.

* Eclectic Repertory, vol. 2, p. 402, from the Transactions of the Medical Society of London, vol. 1, Part 1st,

Thus, at Concord in New-Hampshire, the State Medical Society were requested to examine the cause of general illness in a family. They had suffered under nausea and vomiting for several weeks, accompanied with costiveness, pain and great weakness. The disease gradually became very violent, and assumed all the appearances of colica pictonum. Suspicion was at length excited, and white lead was detected in the sugar. One person, a female, died after having laboured under partial paralysis and frequent and violent convulsions.

On dissection, the colon was found contracted in some parts, the gall-bladder filled with bile, and the vessels of the brain turgid. The skin was of a deep yellow. As the appearance of the stomach is not mentioned, it is to be presumed it was healthy.*

Dr. Drake of Cincinnati, experienced in his own person the effects of its application to an abraded surface. He was severely burnt on both hands, and among the treatment early used, was wrapping the parts in rags dipped in a painter's solution of linseed oil and white lead. A real saturnine colic was the result in about four days after its use.†

Litharge and red-lead. The former is the protoxide of lead in a state of semi-vitrification, and has a grayish-red colour; the latter is the deutoxide, and is of a bright red. Both are poisonous. Red wafers coloured with red-lead are destructive to birds who pick them up, and the same paste is sold for the purpose of destroying beetles, in which it succeeds very effectually. Many toys are also painted with this substance, and thus children have been injured by putting them frequently into their mouths.‡ Sir George Baker states, that twelve infants died successively in convulsions, at Dartmouth (Eng.) in consequence of an ointment, which had litharge in its composition, being applied to the nipples of their nurses.§ Dr. Charters relates of a Fakeer in India, who administered to two soldiers, six drachms of litharge in divided doses. The result was a very violent colica pictonum.||

* New-England Journal, vol. 12, p. 256.

† Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences, vol. 4, p. 51.

‡ Paris' Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 352.

§ Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vol. 3, p. 423.

|| Transactions of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta, vol. 5, p. 155.

The muriate of lead, (oxychloride of lead, Turner's yellow or patent yellow,) is also very poisonous according to Dr. Paris.

Action of air and water upon lead. It was noticed as early as the days of Cæsar and Augustus, by the Roman architect, Vitruvius, that cerusse was formed on this metal by water passing over it, and he therefore forbade its use for water pipes.*

Chemical investigations in latter times, have proved the correctness of this opinion, and the only question has been, in what condition it is present, and under what circumstances it is most freely produced. The following may be taken as the present state of our knowledge.

Lead exposed to the *air* becomes tarnished, and the crust thus formed is a carbonate. It will be produced most rapidly if the air be moist. As to the action of spring waters, Dr. Lambe was of the opinion from his experiments, that they possessed the power of dissolving and corroding lead, to such an extent as to render them dangerous to man. Dr. Thomas Thomson, on the other hand, while he assented to the opinion of their acting on lead, nevertheless maintained that the metal was only held in suspension and not in solution, and that the quantity suspended in such waters, after they had passed through lead pipes, pumps or cisterns, is far too minute to prove injurious. Dr. Christison, in order to reconcile, if possible, these discrepancies, performed a series of experiments. He found that *distilled* water, deprived of its gases, and excluded from contact with the air, has no action whatever on lead. If this water contains the customary gases, the surface of the metal soon becomes white, but this soon ceases, if the surface of the water be not exposed to the air. In that case, and if the air has free access, a white powder soon forms around the lead, and this increases until after a few days, a large number of white pearly scales are produced, which partly float in the water, but are chiefly deposited on the bottom of the vessel. These scales are, on analysis, found to be a carbonate. He also ascertained that during this experiment, a

* Christison, p. 459.

very minute quantity of lead was actually dissolved in the water.*

Our common spring water, however, contains more or less of neutral salts, and to make the inquiry practically useful, it becomes necessary to ascertain their influence in promoting or impeding the action on the lead. Guyton Morveau found that if he added a solution of either sulphate of lime or muriate of soda, (salts very common in spring water,) to distilled water, its power of attacking lead was destroyed. Dr. Christison extended this investigation to many other salts, and found that they all impaired the power of the water, and that even when the carbonate was formed in very minute quantities, it was deposited so slowly and adhered so closely to the lead, that it could hardly be supposed to diffuse itself through the liquid.†

Capt. Philip Yorke has recently examined the subject, and also performed a number of experiments on the action of distilled and spring water. His results in the main correspond with those of Dr. Christison, but he supposes that beside the carbonate, an hydrated oxide of lead is formed, soluble in the water.‡

With these facts, it will not be difficult to answer the question whether it is safe to carry water over lead, or to collect it in cisterns lined with lead. The probability certainly is, that a portion of carbonate of lead is either dissolved or diffused through it, and renders the liquid measurably deleterious; and we have abundance of accounts to illustrate this opinion. Lead colic was unknown at Amsterdam, until the metal was substituted for tiles on the roofs of dwelling-houses; it then raged with great violence. Dr. Yeats, in a paper on the waters of Tunbridge Wells, mentions, that in 1815, lead colics were very frequent at that place. A Mr. Taylor had laid down, in 1814, several thousand feet of leaden pipes, to convey water to the different houses. In the following year, the lead colic occurred in those houses to which this water was distributed; and all doubt as to the existence of the poison in it, was removed by the examinations of Dr. Lambe and

* Christison. p. 460.

† Ibid. p. 462.

‡ London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 5, p. 81.

Mr. Brande. They detected the carbonate, in a very minute state of division, in the water.*

A somewhat similar case is related of officers on board a packet bound to the East Indies. They put their allowances of water in a leaden cistern, furnished with a stop-cock; and in about three weeks, every one of them was affected with all the symptoms of *colica pictonum*, in the most violent degree. On arriving at St. Helena, they gradually recovered.†

It is an evident deduction from the researches of Dr. Christison, that in proportion to the purity of the water, and the presence of carbonic acid, will be the action on the metal.‡

Different articles of food or drink may be contaminated with this substance.

If the *food* contain any free vegetable acids, or saline preparations, it will attack utensils made of lead, and oxidate, and indeed in some cases dissolve them. This circumstance seems to have been known to the ancients. Their tin was all adulterated with lead; and Galen, assigning this as a reason, cautions against the use of tinned vessels, and recommends the preservation of medicines in glass ones.§

* Brande's Journal, vol. 14, p. 352.

† Medical Commentaries, vol. 19, p. 180. The presence of lead in the water was demonstrated by the application of a solution of sulphuretted hydrogen. Additional cases of the injurious effects of water impregnated with lead, may be found in the Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vol. 2, p. 419, &c. The *dry bellyache*, so common in the West Indies, has been ascribed by some to the water passing over their frequently painted roofs, and then being collected in tanks. See London Medical Gazette, vol. 11, p. 78, 795, 873.

‡ In the water of the river Thames, though it flows in leaden pipes, no lead can be detected; and this may be explained by the fact, that the animal matters which constantly accumulate in it, prevent any dissolution or suspension of the metal; they combine with it, and form a bulky, insoluble precipitate. "If you add nitrate of lead to Thames water, you will find that it becomes milky, and that a white powder falls to the bottom, which dissolves without effervescence in nitric acid; it is, therefore, a combination of oxide of lead with some animal matter. Thus it is the impurity of Thames water, that prevents it from containing lead. Probably hard waters, containing sulphate of lime in solution, may also be free from lead. But with these exceptions, we may lay it down as a general fact, that all waters which pass through leaden pipes, or which are kept in leaden cisterns, contain small particles of carbonate of lead." (Dr. T. Thomson, Edinburgh Medical & Surgical Journal, vol. 12, p. 495.)

§ Beckmann on Inventions, vol. 4, p. 29. The question has sometimes been asked, Whether the sheet lead which is wrapped round the tea obtained from China, may not prove injurious? Dr. Thomson has satisfactorily determined this point. He found it, on analysis, to consist of lead 95.5 parts, and tin 4.5 parts in the hundred. This alloy is not so liable to tarnish as pure lead, and it possesses this peculiar advantage, that when it comes in contact with articles of food, the tin is always acted on in preference to the lead. (Annals of Philosophy, vol. 4, p. 155.) Proust established the

Earthen vessels, glazed with lead, are also very apt to be acted on by vegetable acids. Vinegar corrodes them, and if there be any particle of food within, the oxide or acetate that is produced will mix with it;* so also weaker acids. A case occurred some years ago at Northampton, Mass. where a family, consisting of eight individuals, were all seized with colic pains, strong convulsive spasms of the intestines, frequent vomitings and obstinate costiveness, in consequence of eating stewed apples which had been kept for some months in a large earthen vessel. On examination, the glazing was found corroded, and a solution from the stewed apples exhibited the chemical proofs indicative of the metal.† Dr. Eberle also states that he saw four cases in 1815, arising from apple butter being in these vessels. On examining one of them, a thin crust of acetate of lead was seen covering its internal surface.‡

Milk has also acted on vessels of this description.

The adulteration of *wines* by lead appears to be an old device; and it has been much used, since it destroys their austeriety, gives them a sweet taste, and renders them saleable.

Beckmann supposes that the ancients were acquainted with the fact that lead rendered harsh wines milder; for Pliny remarks, that when the Greek and Roman wine merchants wished to try whether their wine was spoilt, they immersed in it a plate of lead, which could only be to observe whether by corrosion the colour of the lead was changed.

It was not until the fifteenth century, that the use of lead in wines became so notorious as to call for prohibitions on the part of governments in Germany; and the adulteration of this article appears to have been a subject of deliberation at the diet of Rothenburg in 1487, and the diet of Worms in 1495.§

fact just mentioned, by numerous experiments. See his paper on Tinning, copied from the *Journal de Physique*, in the Repertory of Arts, 2d series, vol. 9, p. 38 & 145.

* Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vol. 1, p. 257, etc.

† An Account of the poisonous effects of the use of glazed earthen vessels, by Dr. Mende, (New-England Journal, vol. 2, p. 258.) A similar case is related in *ibidem*, vol. 12, p. 253. The apple sauce, when made, is turned hot into these pots, and the glazing is readily acted upon. In the present instance, nearly one-third was found decomposed.

‡ American Medical Recorder, vol. 1, p. 504. See also a paper on the danger of using vessels of lead, copper or brass, in dairies, by Mr. Thomas Hayes, Surgeon, Hampstead, in the Repertory of Arts, 1st series, vol. 7, p. 116.

§ Beckmann on Inventions, vol. 1, p. 396.

In France, this species of villany was carried to a great excess. The Duke of Wirtemberg, by a decree dated March 10, 1690, declared it capital to mix litharge in wine, or even to sell litharge in the shops;* and individuals were punished with death for the infraction of this decree. At the present day, we have every reason to believe that sugar of lead is frequently employed by unprincipled dealers.†

Cider, adulterated by lead, has also frequently proved injurious, and indeed to such an extent, that the disease known by the name of the *Devonshire colic*, has been deemed to originate from this cause. I am aware that other causes have been assigned, but it is sufficient for my present purpose, that this fluid, among others, has excited the symptoms in question; and it is certainly well established, that cider boiled in leaden vessels has produced death to those drinking it, and that the racking of it in a leaden cistern, or even the grinding of the apples in troughs which are united by lead, has been the origin of serious illness.‡

Rum is also another liquor which may act on lead. Dr. John Hunter mentions, that a violent colic prevailed extensively among the soldiers at Jamaica in 1781–2. They were in the habit of drinking rum, and suspecting its purity, he was led to examine it. The result of his experiments induced him to believe that it was contaminated with lead.§ Dr. Franklin also communicated a curious fact to Sir George Baker on this point. About forty years previous, (Sir George's paper was read in 1767,) leaden worms were used Boston for the distillation of rum. The consequence was so violent to drinkers, and the illness so common, that government forbade their use,

* Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vol. 1, p. 346.

† Thirty-two cases occurred in the Duke of Newcastle's family, then in Hanover, in 1752, occasioned by their using as a common drink, a small white wine, adulterated with calces of lead. (Dr. Warren, Trans. Coll. Physicians of London, vol. 2, p. 86.)

‡ See the papers of Sir George Baker and Dr. Warren, in the Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vols. 1, 2, 3. Lond. Med. Gazette, vol. 10, p. 314.

§ Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vol. 3, p. 227. Medical Commentaries, vol. 13, p. 138. When the new rum in the West Indies, thus impregnated, has been kept in a cask for twelve months, it loses its deleterious qualities. This fact is mentioned by Mr. Sylvester, and by him applied to the discovery of a new test—the gallic acid. See Eclectic Repertory, vol. 4, p. 454; Paris's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 342.

and ordered the worms to be constructed of block tin. The dry bellyache was much less heard of afterwards.*

Even *syrups* have been clarified by the acetate of lead, and thus contain a notable portion of the metal.†

Cheese has sometimes been coloured with red lead; and several cases are on record, of families being poisoned by its use. In one instance, a dog, who had eaten the rind, was convulsed, and died in a day.‡

Sugar, apart from the actual intermixture of a salt, has been contaminated by lead. A remarkable instance has occurred in our own country, at Calais in the State of Maine. Nearly one hundred persons were almost simultaneously seized with violent colicky affections; out of that number, three died, and several remained extremely ill—many suffering also under paralysis of the extremities. On examination, it was found that all who used sugar obtained from a certain mercantile house were ill, and none other. This led to a chemical investigation by Dr. Charles T. Jackson of Boston, and he demonstrated the presence of lead. The sugar in this instance came from Barbadoes; and Dr. Jackson suggests, that probably leaden reservoirs were used in preparing the syrup, and that the free acids of the juice acted on them.§

Saturnine emanations are well known to produce dangerous disease; and these, of course, most readily affect workers in lead, as plumbers, painters, type-founders, printers and potters. I shall not, however, enter on this subject at present, as it can hardly, if ever, be a subject of legal investigation, and particularly because it can be examined with most advantage when we treat of the *diseases of manufacturers*, in the part relating to MEDICAL POLICE.||

* Transactions of the College of Physicians of London, vol. 1, p. 286.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 454. The same salt was detected by Labarraque and Pelletier, in the orange water sold in Paris in 1829. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 4, p. 55.)

‡ American Medical Recorder, vol. 7, p. 660.

§ Boston Medical Magazine, June, 1835.

|| The following, however, deserves quotation in this place. It is extracted from the late work of Dr. Cooke on Palsy. "Dr. Cooke was consulted by a gentleman who had a paralytic affection of one side of his face, without any assignable cause. On inquiry, however, it was found that he had slept two or three nights in a room where the bed was placed near a closet, the door of which had been recently painted what is called a dead white." (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 1, p. 736.)

It will be proper, however, to give a short sketch of the symptoms produced by the gradual introduction of small quantities of lead into the system. This will illustrate the effects of adulterated food and drink, and also those produced by emanations, or by working in the metal.

Colic is among the earliest symptoms, and from this circumstance, the complaint has been styled, for a length of time, *colica pictonum*. It is not acute at first, nor of long duration, but frequently returns, and at last becomes intolerably severe. The mouth is dry; there is generally an absence of fever: sickness of the stomach is present, and sometimes vomiting, which will last for several days. The abdomen is drawn inwards towards the navel; and this sinking in is the more observable as the pain becomes more intense. Costiveness is very common, and the alvine excretions are discharged with pain and difficulty. The urine presents no particular character.

Paralysis of the fingers, hands and wrists, is also a frequent accompaniment of this disease, and it occurs most severely in those who are in the constant practice of handling preparations of lead. Convulsive motions, prostration of strength, a dry cough, and a gradual wasting, generally attend this stage of the complaint.

It has been observed by some writers, that the appearances found on dissection in those who have fallen victims to saturnine emanations, are strongly indicative of disease—exhibiting inflammation or obstruction of the mesentery and its glands; affections of the liver, spleen and lungs, and inflammation of the intestines. Most of these are, however, contradicted by modern examiners, and it is denied that, in general, any inflammation is found in the digestive canal. A contraction of the diameter of the great intestines, particularly of the colon, is the only morbid appearance that was noticed in numerous dissections.*

Chemical proofs. A multiplicity of tests have been proposed for the detection of the acetate, or any other of the soluble

* Among late writers on *Colica pictonum*, I may refer to Dr. Stokes' Lectures at Dublin, and Copland's Dictionary. Mr. Dunn, a manufacturer of white lead, detected the metal in the atmosphere of his manufactory. (London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 7, p. 77.)

salts of lead. I shall follow Dr. Christison in stating some of the most unequivocal.

(a.) Sulphuretted hydrogen causes a black precipitate, the sulphuret of lead. This is a very delicate test.

(b.) Chromate of potash gives a beautiful canary yellow precipitate, the chromate of lead.

(c.) Hydriodate of potash causes also a beautiful yellow precipitate, the iodide of lead. If, however, an excess of nitric or acetic acid be present, these acids will cause a yellow colouration even though there be no lead in the solution.* It is important to use each of these tests, since sulphuretted hydrogen produces a black precipitate with other substances.

(d.) If the solution of lead be not too diluted, a piece of zinc suspended in it for some time will produce the usual crystalline arborescence.†

(e.) Sulphate of soda. This is recommended by Dr. T. Thomson as a very minute and unequivocal test. It will produce a white precipitate in water, containing one hundred thousandth of its weight of lead. "The precipitate," says Dr. Thomson, "is a fine dense powder, which speedily falls to the bottom, and is not redissolved by nitric acid; no other precipitate can be confounded with it, except sulphate of barytes, and there is no chance of the presence of barytes in solution in water."‡

The action of animal and vegetable fluids on the acetate of lead, must also be mentioned. A strong infusion of tea produced a yellowish white precipitate. Burgundy wine decomposes the solution, and the mixture thus obtained, gives the characteristic tests of acetate of lead, with the sulphuric and chromic acid, the hydro-sulphurets, the subcarbonate of soda, and zinc. Ammonia, however, produces a dirty yellow turbidness, instead of a white precipitate, and it is therefore not to be depended on in testing adulterated wines. Al-

* To prevent any uncertainty with this test, Mr. R. Johnson has recommended the following modification. Dissolve the sulphuret obtained by (a.) in nitric acid; add carbonate of soda; dissolve the precipitated carbonate of lead in acetic acid with a gentle heat. To this acetic solution, add the hydriodate, and the characteristic colour will be produced. (Lancet, N. S. vol. 7, p. 671.)

† Christison, p. 456.

‡ Paris' Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 363.

bumen produces an abundant white precipitate. Gelatine does not affect it, while milk and bile are copiously coagulated by it.*

The reduction of the sulphuret may be accomplished by putting it into a small hole scraped in a piece of charcoal, and applying the flame of the blow pipe to it. The metal almost immediately appears. If any doubts exist as to its nature, the charcoal may be withdrawn, and the flame again applied, "when two beautiful concentric circles of red and yellow remain, being the yellow and red oxide of lead."

Insoluble matters may be evaporated to dryness, and burnt in a crucible; but generally speaking, nitric acid will dissolve the lead from most of its compounds that are insoluble in water.†

Dr. Charles T. Jackson used the following process in examining the suspected sugar. Five hundred grains were burnt to cinders in a platina crucible, and these cinders again to ashes in a capsule. The ashes were digested with nitric acid, and then evaporated to dryness. They were then treated with water, and filtered. A current of sulphuretted hydrogen was now passed through it, which produced the black sulphuret of lead. This when collected and dried, weighed 1.6 gr. = 1.38 gr. of metallic lead = 2.337 grs. of oxide of lead, or nearly 38 grs. of oxide of lead in one pound of sugar.

Antidotes. From the experiments of Orfila, it appears that the sulphates of soda and magnesia are the most useful remedies against the noxious effects of the salts of lead. They decompose the acetate in particular, and transform it into an insoluble sulphate of lead, which Orfila considers innoxious. The phosphate of soda is also an antidote. He recommends the same treatment for the other preparations. We should aid their operation by diluents and purgatives, and prevent any tendency to inflammation by the antiphlogistic treatment.

The treatment of colica pictonum, does not require a notice in this place.

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 448.

† Christison, p. 483. Lancet, N. S. vol. 7, p. 386.

The sulphuret of potash should never be administered as an antidote, since it is (as we have already shown) itself a poison.

CHROME.

Several of the compounds of this metal are coming into extensive use in the arts, and their effects both on man and animals are found to be extremely active.

Professor Gmelin of Tübingen, performed numerous experiments with the chromate of potash. When one grain was injected into the jugular vein of a dog, it produced no effect. Four grains induced constant vomiting, and death in six days, without any distinct symptoms except weakness, and without any obvious morbid appearance. Ten grains caused instant death by suddenly stopping the action of the heart.

When introduced under the skin, its effects are still more remarkable. It seems to cause general inflammation of the lining membrane of the air passages. Thus, when a drachm in powder was inserted under the skin of the neck of a dog, the symptoms were want of appetite, vomiting, a purulent matter discharged from the eyes, palsy of the hind legs, difficulty of swallowing, and death on the sixth day. On dissection, the wound was seen not much inflamed, but the larynx, bronchiæ and ramifications of the air tubes, contained fragments of fibrinous effusion, and the nostrils were full of similar matter.

When swallowed, the salts of chrome cause inflammation, but not of a violent kind.*

The workmen in Glasgow who use the bichromate of potash in dyeing, early observed injurious effects from immersing their hands in its solution. Troublesome sores soon broke out on the parts touched by it, and these gradually extended deeper and deeper, without spreading, until they in some cases actually made their way through the arm or hand altogether.†

Dr. Cuming of Glasgow, and Dr. Baer of Baltimore, (in

* *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 26, p. 133.

† *Ibid.* vol. 26, p. 134.

which latter place the bichromate of potash is largely manufactured) confirm the frequency of these effects on the workmen. The former remarks that the first effect of the habitual application to the skin, is to cause a papulous eruption, and this after a little time becomes pustulous. If the exposure be continued, deep sloughs form under the pustules. To prevent these effects, an apparatus was constructed so as to require only the immersion of the tips of the fingers; but even here the eruption made its appearance in susceptible individuals.* Dr. Baer has seen these ulcers on parts of the body where he is sure the solution did not come in contact, and he is therefore disposed to ascribe them to the effects of vapours charged with chromic acid. He however observed no impression on the skin from the most concentrated form of the solution, when the cuticle was not abraded.

Several fatal cases have occurred in Baltimore, of poisoning with the saturated liquor of the bichromate of potash. The following was communicated by Dr. Baer to Professor Ducatel. A labourer ætat 35, on attempting to draw off from a refiner a solution, in the effort to exhaust the siphon by suction, received a small quantity of the solution into his mouth. His first impression was that he had spit it out; but only a few minutes elapsed before he was seized with great heat in the throat and stomach, and violent vomiting of blood and mucus. The vomiting continued until just before his death, which occurred in five hours. On dissection, the mucous tissue of the stomach, duodenum and about one-fifth of the jejunum, was found destroyed in patches. The remaining parts of it could be easily removed by the handle of the scalpel.†

Antidote. Dr. Ducatel recommends the exhibition of a solution of the carbonate of soda or potash, for the purpose of neutralizing the excess of acid to which the injury is mainly to be ascribed. The subsequent inflammation is to be treated on general principles.

The rarer metals have also been made the subject of ex-

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 28, p. 301.

† Prof. Ducatel, in Baltimore Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 44. Ducatel's Manual of Toxicology, p. 144.

periments, particularly by Professor Gmelin. A brief notice of their effects will be sufficient.

Molybdenum, in the form of molybdate of ammonia, appears to be a feeble poison. Half a drachm killed a rabbit in two hours, causing strong convulsions before death. In dogs, it produced merely vomiting and diarrhœa, and ten grains injected into the jugular vein did not prove fatal.

Tungsten, in the form of tungstate of ammonia, and in the dose of a drachm, had no effect when swallowed by a dog. The tungstate of soda caused some vomiting. With rabbits, however, the salts of this metal, if given in large quantities, are fatal. They die in convulsions and some inflammation is found in the stomach.

Tellurium. Of this, he had not sufficient to make a complete set of experiments. Ten grains of the oxide killed a rabbit in ten days without any particular symptoms.

Titanium appears innoxious.

Osmium is an active poison. The muriate causes immediate, violent, and long continued vomiting, even in small doses. Rabbits were soon destroyed, and the stomach, intestines, and œsophagus were black, rough, and hard on the inside, owing to a reduction of the salt by animal matter. A grain and a half of metallic osmium killed a dog in an hour, with vomiting and convulsions.

The hydrochlorate of *Iridium* caused vomiting and diarrhœa in dogs and death in rabbits, apparently through inflammation. Six grains injected into the jugular of a dog produced death in four minutes.

The double muriate of soda and *Rhodium* had no effect in doses of fifteen grains on rabbits, and even when ten grains were injected, the immediate prostration was recovered from, and the animal died in five days without any particular symptoms.

The muriate (hydrochlorate) of *Palladium*, is a very active poison. Three grains injected into the jugular vein of a dog killed it within a minute, by destroying the irritability of the heart and causing partial coagulation of the blood. A few grains taken into the stomach caused vomiting, diarrhœa

and weariness in dogs. In rabbits, it produces no particular symptoms, but loss of appetite and death take place in three days from general and violent inflammation of the stomach.

Nickel. The sulphate is inactive. Twenty grains given to a dog, produced no effect except vomiting and weariness. The same quantity, however, caused convulsions and death in a rabbit. When inserted into the cellular tissue, although the whole of the salt was absorbed, no deleterious effect was induced.

Cobalt. This is more active. Thirty grains of the muriate, when swallowed, killed a rabbit within a day. Twenty-four grains inserted under the skin caused frequent vomiting, but the animal recovered. Three grains of sulphate injected into a vein proved fatal in four days.

Uranium. Three grains of the nitrate when injected into a vein, caused instant death, but dogs swallowed fifteen and from that to sixty grains, without any effect, except slight vomiting.

Cerium is quite inactive. A drachm caused no inconvenience in a dog, nor half that quantity on a rabbit.

Manganese presented some peculiar effects. A drachm of the sulphate killed a rabbit in an hour, but thirty grains swallowed by a dog, or two drachms inserted into the cellular tissue, were without any effect. Twelve grains injected into a vein induced death in five days, and the stomach, duodenum and liver were much inflamed. The latter organ particularly was mottled with inflamed streaks, that penetrated into its substance.*

At a subsequent period, Professor Hunefeld of Griefswalde, found that analogous effects were produced on the liver by manganestic acid, but that it could hardly be called a poison. Although large doses were given to a rabbit, it survived them, but on being killed, the liver was found soft, and one part bright red, while elsewhere it was of a dark brownish red. When this organ was incinerated, its ashes gave unequivocal indications of manganese.†

* Gmelin, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 134 to 138.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 460.

Oxide of *Cadmium*, in a dose of twenty grains, made a dog vomit, but ten grains had no effect at all.*

BARYTES AND ITS SALTS.

All its soluble salts are poisonous, and on this account, the sulphate, being insoluble, is not so. The muriate is generally deemed a more active agent than the pure or the carbonated barytes.

Barytes, whether pure or carbonated, when introduced into the stomach, produces vomiting, hiccup, insensibility, convulsions and death. The stomach was found inflamed throughout its whole extent, and extravasations of black blood were seen near the pylorus. The lungs and intestines were natural.†

Mr. Parkes mentions that he visited the mine of carbonate of barytes at Anglezark, in the county of Lancaster, and was informed by Mr. Derbyshire, who occupies the estate on which the mine is situated, that some years since he lost three cows at one time, which had strayed from their pasture and were found licking some lumps of the spar, which at that time lay about the mouth of the mine in abundance. It was also stated, that it was impossible to keep any fowls upon the farm, as they mistook the barytes for white sand. They were sure to die on the first day that they got out upon the land. Mr. Parkes also adds the following quotation from Leigh's History of Lancashire: "Some have been hardy enough to take a drachm at one dose, particularly one James Barnes' wife and child, and in about nine hours afterwards they expired. The like quantity in about three hours will kill a dog."‡

A recent case of poisoning by the carbonate has been described by Dr. Wilson. A young female took half a tea cup full of it, to which she previously added water. Soon after, she took some medicine, which induced vomiting.

In two hours, double vision, pain in the head, and weight in the epigastrium, followed. Pain and cramps over the whole body next occurred. Repeated doses of sulphate of magne-

* Christison, p. 453.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 1, p. 396.

‡ Parkes' Chemical Essays, London, 1815, vol. 2, p. 217.

sia were given, but the pain and cramp continued for several weeks, and her recovery was protracted.*

Muriate of barytes, when injected into the jugular vein, caused great agitation and convulsions, and death ensued in six minutes after the operation. On dissection, the heart was found distended with coagulated blood, the stomach was natural, while the lungs were crepitating, and rather denser than usual.

When applied to a wound in the state of powder, Mr. Brodie found that it produced vertigo, paralysis of the posterior extremities, general insensibility, dilated pupils, convulsions and death. The stomach and intestines were not affected. The lungs were exactly in the same situation as in the previous experiment.

Orfila and Brodie have each introduced this substance into the stomach of animals. It excited vomiting and purging, violent convulsions, and greatly accelerated the pulse. Insensibility generally ensued previous to death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was of a livid red colour, and it could be easily rubbed off. The muscular coat exhibited two broad patches of a cherry red colour. The lungs were natural, but the left ventricle of the heart contained black fluid blood.†

We have also some instances of its effects on the human system. An over-dose (probably seventy or eighty drops,) excited violent purging and vomiting, loss of muscular motion in the limbs and coldness of the extremities, from which the patient did not recover in some days.‡ An ounce in solution, which was taken by mistake for Glauber's salts, produced instant vomiting, convulsions, pain in the head and deafness, and death supervened within an hour after the exhibition of the poison.§

* London Medical Gazette, vol. 14, p. 488.

† Chaptal mentions, that MM. Huzard and Biron gave to some horses the muriate and carbonate of barytes in doses of 118 grains every day, and these animals died suddenly after having taken them for a few days. (Chemistry, applied to the Arts, vol. 2, p. 74.)

‡ Medical Commentaries, vol. 19, p. 151.

§ Brande's Journal, vol. 4, p. 382.

Chemical tests. Sulphuretted hydrogen does not produce any change in barytic solutions.

In case the antidote which we shall presently mention has been given, additional difficulties will be presented in endeavoring to detect the poison. Probably the most satisfactory process will be to add nitric acid, and then filter and convert the whole to sulphate of barytes, by adding sulphate of soda. Heat the precipitate for half an hour, which will convert the sulphate to a sulphuret. The sulphuretted hydrogen will be disengaged by adding muriatic acid, and the earth remains for examination with its tests as given in all works on chemistry.*

Antidotes. From the experiments of Orfila, it appears that the sulphate of soda or magnesia, is the proper remedy, when early administered. These decompose the poison, and produce an insoluble sulphate of barytes. Vomiting must always be encouraged.

The salts of *Strontia*, according to Gmelin, are very feebly poisonous.†

* Christison, p. 509.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 132.

CHAPTER XIX.

IRRITANT POISONS, (*concluded.*)

4. **VEGETABLE AND ANIMAL IRRITANTS.** *Vegetable acrids.* Bryonia dioica. Momordica elaterium; elatine. Cucumis colocynthis. Euphorbia officinarum, and other species. Ricinus communis. Jatropha curcas, manihot, and other species. Hippomane mancinella. Croton tiglium. Ranunculus acris, and other species. Anemone pulsatilla, and other species. Caltha palustris. Delphinium staphysagria. Clematis vitalba. Chelidonium majus. Daphne gnidium, and mezereum. Convolvulus jalapa, and scammonia. Narcissus pseudo-narcissus. Pedicularis palustris. Gratiola officinalis. Gamboge. Savine. Rhus radicans, and other species. Sedum acre. Rhododendron chrysanthemum. Cyclamen europæum. Plumbago europæa. Lobelia syphilitica, and other species. Pastinaca sativa. Hydrocotyle vulgaris. Phytolacca decandra. Calla palustris. Arum maculatum. Sambucus ebulus. — Treatment. — **ANIMAL IRRITANTS.** Cantharides—symptoms; cases; appearances on dissection; treatment. Lytta vittata. *Poisonous Serpents.* Viper. Rattlesnake—symptoms of its bite; appearances on dissection; treatment. Scorpion. Tarantula. Spider. Bee. Humble bee. Wasp. Hornet. *Poisonous Fishes.* Catalogue of these; cause of fish poison; effects; treatment. Mussels—oysters—crab—lobster—mackerel; dangerous effect of these at certain seasons of the year. Physalia. Toad. Pheasant or partridge—its poisonous nature at certain seasons. Poisonous honey—cause—effects—treatment. Wounds received during dissection—consequences—treatment.
5. **MECHANICAL IRRITANTS.** Glass and enamel in powder—effects—cases.
6. **IRRITANT GASES.** Chlorine—effects—antidotes. Nitrous acid vapour—effects—cases. Muriatic acid gas. Sulphurous acid gas. Seleniuretted hydrogen gas.

IN noticing the **VEGETABLE ACRIDS** or **IRRITANTS**, which constitute the fourth class of Irritant Poisons, I shall consider those that belong to the same natural order of plants in connexion with each other. Beyond this, it would hardly be useful to follow a botanical arrangement. The following catalogue will therefore serve as an index.

<i>Cucurbitaceæ,</i>	<i>Ranunculaceæ,</i>	<i>Convolvulaceæ,</i>
Bryonia,	Ranunculus,	Convolvulus.
Momordica,	Anemone,	<i>Amaryllidæ,</i>
Cucumis,	Caltha,	Narcissus.
<i>Euphorbiaceæ,</i>	Delphinium,	<i>Scrophularineæ,</i>
Euphorbia,	Clematis.	Pedicularis,
Ricinus,	<i>Papaveraceæ,</i>	Gratiola.
Jatropha,	Chelidonium.	<i>Guttifera,</i>
Hippomane,	<i>Thymelææ,</i>	Stalagmites.
Croton.	Daphne.	

<i>Coniferae</i> ,	<i>Plumbagineae</i> ,	<i>Aroideae</i> ,
Juniperus.	Plumbago.	Calla,
<i>Anacardiaceae</i> ,	<i>Lobeliaceae</i> ,	Arum.
Rhus.	Lobelia.	<i>Caprifoliaceae</i> ,
<i>Ficoideae</i> ,	<i>Umbelliferae</i> ,	Sambucus.
Sedum.	Pastinaca,	
<i>Ericae</i> ,	Hydrocotyle.	
Rhododendron.	<i>Phytolaccae</i> ,	
<i>Primulaceae</i> ,	Phytolacca.	
Cyclamen.		

Bryonia dioica, L. (Bryony.) The administration of bryony root has caused vomiting, fainting, violent pain, profuse alvine evacuations, &c. When administered to dogs in whom the œsophagus was tied, death ensued without any previous remarkable symptom; but the mucous membrane of the stomach was of a bright red, and the great intestines were highly inflamed.*

Pyl mentions a fatal case from taking two glasses of an infusion of the root, to cure an ague. Tormina and purging soon followed, and the patient sunk under it.

Brandes and Firnhaber discovered a principle in the root, which is denominated *Bryonine*. It acts, according to the experiments of Collard de Martigny, like the plant itself, inducing inflammation and thickening of the coats of the stomach. When twenty grains were injected into the pleura, it caused death in seven hours, and all the marks of true pleurisy were present—serous effusion, pseudo-membrane, and gorging of the lungs.†

Momordica elaterium, L. (Wild or squirting cucumber.) The expressed juice of the fruit of this plant, on standing, deposits a substance, which has been variously styled an inspissated juice, a fecula, and an extract, but is strictly speaking neither of them. It is dried, and in that state, forms the medicinal article. Among cathartics, to which class it belongs in the materia medica, it is deemed the most violent, and indeed the severity of its operation is such that it has for a long time been banished from the practice of medicine. Its active principle is now, however, understood, and its operation can therefore be regulated.

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 13.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 215.

Elaterium, when given to the amount of three drachms to a dog whose œsophagus had been tied, produced nausea and efforts to vomit, moaning, insensibility and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was found highly inflamed, as was also the rectum, but the other intestines were not altered. Similar effects were produced by inserting the extract into a wound.*

A female in Boston took, by the advice of a quack, four pills of the extract of elaterium and rhubarb, (the total being $2\frac{2}{3}$ grains of the extract, and 16 of rhubarb.) They produced incessant vomiting and purging, and without yielding to the use of remedies, she sunk in thirty-six hours after the last pill was taken. On dissection, the mucous membrane of the stomach was found to be highly injected; the colon contracted, and all the intestines inflamed. The other viscera were healthy.†

Drs. Clutterbuck and Paris were supposed to have discovered the active principle of this substance some years since: it was styled *elatine*. This, however, was a compound; and Dr. Morries of Edinburgh, and Mr. Hennel of London, nearly at the same time, obtained the peculiar crystalline principle, which deserves that name. A tenth of a grain will purge a man; and a fifth of a grain, in two doses, killed a rabbit after some hours.‡

Cucumis colocynthis, L. (Bitter apple.) The only part of this plant which is used in medicine, is the dried, spongy or medullary part of the fruit. It is well known as a drastic cathartic. Stalpart relates a case, where an individual took some of it, and was shortly after seized with the most excruciating pains in the abdomen, bloody evacuations, and violent spasms.§ He also quotes cases from Tulpus, Schenkus and Platerus, indicating its powerful operation, and mentions that, in one

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 14. Dr. Parsons did not find the inflammation of the rectum, in an experiment performed by him on a dog. (American Medical Recorder, vol. 14, p. 356.)

† Boston Medical Magazine, vol. 3, p. 25.

‡ London Medical Repository, vol. 12, p. 5. Paris's Pharmacologia, p. 270. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 35, p. 339. Journal of the Royal Institution, vol. 1, p. 532.

§ "Fateor," he observes, "profecto nunquam me tam horrenda in quoquam conspexisse symptomata." (Stalpart, vol. 1, p. 173.)

instance, death followed from an enema, in which not more than a drachm of colocynth had been infused.

An individual labouring under hæmorrhoids, and affected with indigestion, took two glasses of a decoction, which subsequently proved to be that of colocynth. Frequent alvine evacuations, accompanied with colic, were among the first effects; and some hours afterwards, he complained of great heat in the bowels, dryness in the fauces, and unquenchable thirst. The pulse was small, and extremely rapid; the tongue red; the abdomen intolerant of pressure, and there was a very violent fixed pain in the vicinity of the umbilicus. The evacuations by the bowels had now ceased. The antiphlogistic regimen was employed, but without success. Coldness of the extremities succeeded, and he gradually sunk, after a previous diminution of the abdominal pain. On dissection, the abdominal viscera exhibited marks of the most violent inflammation. The peritoneal cavity was filled with a whitish fluid, containing flocculi of the same colour. The intestines were reddened, and thickly studded with black specks; most of them were either adherent, or covered with adventitious membrane. The mucous membrane of the stomach was detached and ulcerated, and the peritonæum in an almost putrid condition. Traces of inflammation existed also in the liver, kidneys, and bladder.*

A coroner's inquest was held in London in 1823, on the body of a woman, who died in twenty-four hours with incessant vomiting and purging, in consequence of having swallowed by mistake a teaspoonful and a half of colocynth powder.†

The symptoms produced on animals by the introduction of this substance into the stomach, are in general similar to those experienced in the human subject. Dissection exhibits an inflammation of the *stomach* and *rectum*, while the great bulk of the intestines are in a natural state. No eschar was noticed.‡

The active principle of this plant was discovered by Vauquelin, and is termed *colocynthin*.

* Orfila's *Toxicologie*, vol. 1, p. 696, 3d edition. Case communicated by M. Carron D'Anney.

† Christison, p. 524.

‡ Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 17, 21.

Euphorbia officinarum, L. The stalk of the various species of the genus *Euphorbia* furnishes a milky juice, which, on being dried, is called *euphorbium*. It is a gum-resin, and obtained principally from the above plant.* Its medicinal use is solely as an errhine, and farriers employ it for blistering horses.

A female in Lincoln (Eng.) took by mistake, eighteen days after delivery, two ounces of tincture of euphorbium, prepared with camphor, alcohol and euphorbium. She immediately experienced a violent suffocation, burning, and pain in the throat and stomach. On the administration of warm water, copious vomiting was induced, but the pain continued for some time, nor was it relieved until after the repeated application of suitable remedies.†

In another instance, a teaspoonful was administered by a farrier in the dark, through mistake for rhubarb. A burning heat in the throat and fauces was immediately felt, which soon extended to the stomach—an incessant vomiting of watery fluid took place; the tongue was covered with thick mucus; the pulse was very irregular, and at least 150 in a minute; and the patient was in a cold perspiration, and unable to speak intelligibly. An emetic was given, but it brought away only a small quantity of a thin black fluid; and mucilages and anodynes, when exhibited, were almost instantly rejected. The patient lived nearly three days, and on opening the body eight hours after death, there were found in the stomach several gangrenous spots, and its coats tore on the slightest touch. The spleen was much enlarged and rotten, while the vessels of the internal coat of the aorta were beautifully injected with blood, and showed marks of the highest degree of inflammation.‡

When introduced into the stomach of animals, it produced violent pain and death; and the stomach, on dissection, contained a red, bloody fluid, mixed with powder of euphorbium;

* This species is a native of the Cape of Good Hope, and the recent juice is so corrosive as to erode the skin wherever it touches. The people who gather it, tie a cloth over the mouth and nostrils, to protect them from the acrid dust of the withered branches. (Thomson's London Dispensatory, p. 297.)

† Case by Dr. Willis. Philosophical Transactions, vol. 51, p. 662.

‡ Brande's Journal, vol. 3, p. 51. Case communicated by Mr. Furnival.

its coats were all of a very deep red, and the colon and rectum were highly inflamed.*

Several chemists have examined this substance, and found in it a resin, in which its active principles reside. This again has been ascertained to be a compound, and the leading ingredient extracted from it is styled *euphorbin*.†

Many other species of euphorbia are poisonous, as the *E. lathyris*, L. the *E. cyparissias*, L. and the *E. tirucalli*, L. The second of these excoriated a man's face, on being rubbed with it; and Lamotte mentions, that a glyster prepared with this plant proved fatal. In a person who allowed his closed eyelids to be rubbed with the juice of the *E. esula*, L. inflammation followed, and it was succeeded by the loss of the eye.‡ Hyder Ali, in his ferocious wars against the English in India, ordered the wells to be poisoned with the *E. tirucalli*, L.§ The juice of the *E. antiquorum*, L. and *E. heptagona*, L. are each said to be employed by the inhabitants of the countries where they are natives, in poisoning their spears and arrows.||

A case of poisoning with the *E. peplus*, L. (petty spurge,) occurred in England. A boy, six years old, eat it by mistake. It induced vomiting and purging, spasms, small pulse, inability to swallow, insensibility, cold extremities, and death. On dissection, the tonsils, fauces, and pharynx were seen much inflamed; the mucous membrane of the stomach and small intestines was altogether red, but the large intestines were healthy, except that their muscular coat was slightly vascular; the bladder was greatly contracted; the epiglottis and larynx highly inflamed, and containing some tenacious green mucus; the lungs were healthy; the blood fluid, or only partially coagulated; the veins of the dura mater distended, but the substance of the brain healthy.¶

The *E. corollata*, L. of this country, appears, according to Dr. Zollickoffer, to possess epispastic properties.**

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 43.

† Christison, p. 518.

‡ Scopoli, quoted by Orfila.

§ Quarterly Review, vol. 18, p. 47, American edition.

|| Ainslie's Materia Indica, vol. 1, p. 123. History of British India, (Family Library,) vol. 3, p. 122.

¶ Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 7, p. 275.

** American Journal of Medical Science, vol. 12, p. 76. Hannibal, when pursued

Ricinus communis, L. (Palma Christi, castor oil plant.) The castor oil used in medicine, is obtained by expression from the seeds of this plant. They act in the most powerful manner on the system, and produce violent vomiting and purging: such was also the effect observed by Orfila on animals. Thirty grains produced death in a small dog, whose œsophagus was not tied. Inflammation and ulceration were noticed in the stomach.*

Jatropha curcas, L. (Indian nut. Tuva tree of the Phillippine Islands.) The seeds of this plant act as a violent poison, and excite vomiting, insensibility, great weakness and death. Violent inflammation was found in the mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines. It was more active in its operation, when introduced into the stomach, than when applied to the cellular texture.†

The fresh root or the juice of the *Jatropha manihot*, L. (*Janipha manihet*, Kunth.) has been long known as a violent poison.‡ It produces swelling of the body, nausea, vomiting and purging, pain, tenesmus, loss of sight, coldness of the extremities, faintings and death.§ Dr. Clark of Dominica, knew a strong negro to die in little more than an hour after drinking half a pint of the juice. Thirty-six drops were administered to a criminal. They had scarcely reached his stomach when he writhed and became convulsed, and died in six minutes. On dissection, no alteration was found, except that the stomach was shrunk to half its natural size.||

by the Romans, took some poison which he had carried about with him in a ring, and died immediately. It is a conjecture of the eminent Mr. Hatchett, that this may have been the inspissated exudation of the *Euphorbia officinalis*. (Sir Henry Hallford's Essays, p. 156.)

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 29.

† Mr. Bennet says that the seeds are used as a purgative by native doctors of the Phillippine Islands. In an over dose, they produce vomiting and purging and violent pain. The only antidote of the native practitioners is repeated draughts of cold water. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 9, p. 8.)

‡ See Piso, quoted by Orfila, vol. 2, p. 73, and Philosophical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 634.

§ Humboldt states that there are two kinds of *juca*, which furnish the cassava or manihot. The root of the *juca dulce* is perfectly innocent, but that of the *juca amara* or bitter manihot, conceals a deadly poison. Heat, however, will destroy its noxious qualities. (Edinburgh Review, vol. 16, p. 245, American edition.)

|| Medical Facts and Observations, vol. 7, p. 289; Edinburgh Journal of Geographical and Natural Science, vol. 3, p. 384, from Hooker's Botanical Magazine. From

The *Jatropha multifida*, L. is probably equally poisonous.*

Hippomane mancinella, L. (Manchineel tree.) Dr. Peyssonnel relates that a soldier, who was a slave with the Turks, eat some of the apples of this tree, and was soon seized with a swelling and pain of the abdomen. His lips were ulcerated with the fruit and a cold sweat came over him. Having taken some remedy, (the avellana purgatrix,) vomiting and purging were induced to a violent degree. He, however, gradually recovered.†

The wood of this tree, when green, will excite inflammation on the skin when rubbed against it;‡ and it affords a most beautiful article of furniture, being interspersed with green and yellow veins, like marble, but the dust is of so acrid and poisonous a nature, that the sawyers and carpenters are forced to work with gauze masks, to protect them from its injurious effects.§

Dr. Ricord Madianna, in his experiments on animals, found that the juice excited inflammation, even when applied to the sound skin.||

Orfila and Ollivier applied it to a wound in the cellular tissue with fatal consequences, and when given internally it destroyed the animal. On dissection, the stomach and intestines were found highly injected.¶

Croton tiglium, L. (Purging croton.) The seeds of this plant have an acrid, nauseous and burning taste. They were formerly employed as hydragogue purgatives, but on account of the violence of their operation were completely laid aside. One seed is sufficient for a dose, and even this sometimes excites violent purging and vomiting.**

a late analysis of Henry, it would appear that the juice of the *Jatropha manihot* contains hydrocyanic acid, or something akin to it. (Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 7, p. 134.)

* Brande's Journal, vol. 20, p. 95.

† Philosophical Transactions, vol. 50, p. 772.

‡ Philosophical Transactions, vol. 3, p. 824.

§ Edinburgh Review, vol. 17, p. 374, American edition.

|| New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 3, p. 309, 439.

Dr. Ricord thinks that the *feuillea cordifolia* alone deserves the name of an antidote for this poison.

¶ Orfila's Toxicologie, 3d edition, vol. 1, p. 719.

** See Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 13, p. 256.

Within a few years past the expressed oil of this plant has come into considerable use as an article of the materia medica. From one to three drops is a dose.*

Ranunculus acris, L. (Butter cups.) Its leaves are an acrid and irritating external application, producing inflammation and ulcers. Internally given, the juice of its leaves produced inflammation of the mucous membrane of the stomach.

Ranunculus sceleratus, L. (Water crowfoot,) excited severe pains and convulsive movements in Krapf, although he took only a single flower, which he had well pounded. Its leaves and juice excoriated the tongue and mouth, and produced burning pain in the œsophagus. Plenck destroyed a dog with its juice, and found the stomach red and corroded, and the pylorus tumefied. Externally applied, it produces extensive ulcers.

Ranunculus flammula, L. has often destroyed whole flocks of animals, from grazing on it in the spring.

Ranunculus arvensis, L. poisons sheep, and three ounces of its expressed juice killed a dog in four minutes.†

Several other species are equally poisonous, as the *bulbosus*, *ficaria*, *alpestris*, *aquatilis*, &c.‡

Anemone pulsatilla, L. (Wind flower.) Bulliard relates the case of an old man with rheumatic gout, who applied the root of this plant bruised, to the calf of his leg, on going to bed. Cruel sufferings succeeded for ten or twelve hours, and the whole limb became gangrenous, nor was it restored until after the application of vigorous remedies. The dried root on being pounded has excited irritation of the eyes, itching and vomiting. Lastly, animals to whom the extract or the juice of the leaves had been administered, sunk under it, and exhibited the marks of violent inflammation in the stomach and

* According to Dr. Nimmo of Glasgow, the kernels of the seeds of the *Croton* are composed of 37 parts of acrid purgative principle, 33 of fixed oil, and 40 of farinaceous matter in the hundred. The oil itself consists of 45 acrid principle, and 55 fixed oil. (Brande's Journal, vol. 13, p. 62.)

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 21, p. 12.

‡ The *Ranunculus acris*, *sceleratus*, *flammula*, *bulbosus* and *aquatilis*, are natives of the United States. According to Dr. Pulteney, (Transactions Linnæan Society,) several species are eaten by animals without injury. See his observations in the Philosophical Magazine, vol. 6, p. 210.

rectum. The dried powder produced no inconvenience to them.*

The *Anemone pratensis*, *sylvestris*, and *nemorosa*, are also deemed poisons. The latter produces dysentery in sheep when they feed on it.† The inhabitants of Kamschatka make use of this plant to poison their arrows,‡ and the wounds are most commonly fatal.‡

Caltha palustris, L. (Marsh marigold,) is said by Christison to be extremely acrid. A family of five persons in Germany took some of it for food. They were all seized in half an hour with sickness, pain in the stomach, vomiting, dysuria and diarrhœa, and on the next day with swelling of the whole body and a copious eruption. They however all recovered.§

Delphinium staphysagria, L. (Palmated larkspur, staves-acre.) An ounce of this substance introduced into the stomach of a dog, whose œsophagus was tied, caused dejection, but neither vertigo or convulsions, and death succeeded in fifty hours. The mucous membrane of the stomach was inflamed, but the other organs presented no alteration. When applied to a wound in a moistened state, it induced dejection, vertigo, and finally death. The wound was inflamed, and the limb greatly swelled, but the digestive canal was sound. Its local effects are evidently the most striking.

Lassaigne and Fenuelle discovered the alkaloid, *delphine*, in this plant. It is described as extremely acrid.||

Delphinium tricorne, Mx., is one of the plants, according to Professor Short, which are indefinitely called *Staggerweed*, and from eating which the diseases of cattle are sometimes attributed in the western states.¶

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 43, 44.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 21, p. 12.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 46. Mr. Robert extracted a fluid of an acrid taste and pungent odour, from the flowers of the *Anemone pratensis*, L. which acted like a caustic on the tongue. Vauquelin examined and confirmed his experiments, and deems the substance a peculiar one, which is probably common to the clemates and ranunculi. It should be arranged, according to him, with the concrete oily substances. (London Medical Repository, vol. 14, p. 403.)

§ Christison, p. 257, from Rust's Magazine.

|| Annals of Philosophy, vol. 16, p. 32; Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 42, p. 234.

¶ Florula Lexingtoniensis, in Transylvania Journal, vol. 1, p. 411.

Clematis vitalba, L. (Virgin's bower.) *Clematis flammula*, L. *erecta*, L. and *integrifolia*, L. These are all acrid and caustic. When applied to the skin, they produce redness, pustules and excoriations; introduced into the stomach, they occasion an inflammation, which destroys the animal.

Chelidonium majus, L. (celandine,) produced death in animals, both when introduced into the stomach and when applied to wounds, by Orfila. In the former case, the stomach was found inflamed, but not in the latter. The wounds, however, were inflamed and livid; and from both modes of application, the lungs were seen livid and distended with blood. This plant is naturalized in this country. The *Chelidonium glaucium* has caused delirium and purging in a family, who ate of a pie in which it had by mistake been put.*

Daphne gnidium, L. (Spurge flax. Flax-leaved daphne.) The bark of this substance, like the poisons already noticed, excited vomiting, local inflammation and death, and the stomach also presents an appearance similar to what has been already described.

Daphne mezereum, L. (Mezereon.) Acts in a similar manner. Linnæus relates of a young lady, who died from hæmoptysis, occasioned by taking twelve berries of this plant.† Several other species are deemed poisonous. In animals poisoned by the *Daphne laureola*, L. (Spurge laurel,) Orfila observed a sanguineous effusion below the mucous coat of the stomach.‡

Convolvulus jalapa, L. (Jalap.) In large doses this is an acrid poison. Mr. Hume and Drs. Buchner and Herberger, appear to have established that its active properties reside in a resinous principle.§

Convolvulus scammonia, L. (Scammony.) The experiments of Orfila contradict the opinion of some toxicologists, that the juice of this plant is poisonous. He frequently administered four drachms of it to dogs, who had the œsophagus after-

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. 20, p. 263.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 27.

‡ Andral, quoted in Journal of Foreign Science, vol. 3, p. 402. Vauquelin and Dublanc have analysed the plants of this species. Brande's Journal. vol. 18, p. 177, 401. Christison, p. 528.

§ Christison, p. 529.

wards tied, and he only observed alvine evacuations. They lived six or seven days.

Narcissus pseudo-narcissus, L. (Meadow narcissus, daffodil.) The extract of this plant, whether externally or internally applied, produced violent vomiting or attempts to vomit. Death shortly ensued, and in every instance the mucous membrane of the stomach was inflamed, and in several, that of the rectum.

Pedicularis palustris, L. has an acrid burning taste, and is said by Gleditsch and Gunner to have injured sheep and oxen.

Gratiola officinalis, L. (Hedge hyssop.) Death followed after a considerable interval, from the introduction of the extract of this substance into the stomach of animals, and the mucous membrane was inflamed. The same result followed from inserting it into a wound, but the stomach was sound.*

Stalagmites cambogioides, Murr. *Garcinea cambogia*, D. C. (Gamboge.) This gum-resin, when introduced in quantity into the stomach of animals, whose œsophagus was tied, produced violent efforts to vomit, purging, dejection, and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was inflamed, and some reddish spots were seen in the rectum. When this operation was not performed, and dogs were suffered to vomit, it did not cause any serious accident.

Juniperus sabina, L. (Savine.) A native of Canada. Found also in the Rocky Mountains by Lewis and Clarke.

This is well known as a powerful stimulant. When administered to animals in doses of four and six drachms, it caused death, and left inflammation of the mucous membrane of the stomach, with a small ulcer near the pylorus. The rectum was somewhat inflamed. And this last was observed in every experiment.

The abuse of the substance, both in the form of oil and powder, in producing abortion, has been noticed in another place, and the case communicated by Mr. Cockson of Macclesfield, to Dr. Christison, referred to.† I may add the re-

* Dr. Whiting announced at a meeting of the London Medico-Botanical Society, that *veratrine* had been discovered in this plant. (Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 1.)

† Vol. 1, p. 317.

maining particulars. The female miscarried in about 54 hours, (on Saturday) and she died on the Thursday following. Mr. Cockson on dissection, found extensive peritoneal inflammation, and the inside of the stomach of a red tint, checkered with patches of florid extravasation.*

Rhus radicans, L. *toxicodendron*, L. *vernix*, L., *R. venenata*, D. C. All these are natives of the United States, and the *R. radicans* and *toxicodendron* are by some deemed merely varieties of the same species.

The watery extract of the *radicans*, when internally administered, or applied to the cellular texture, produced a local irritation and inflammation, and after death, the mucous coat of the stomach was seen inflamed.

The juice of the *Rhus toxicodendron*, (poison oak, poison ivy,) is said by Fontana to have proved innocent to animals who were made to swallow it; but a very small portion of the milky juice applied to the human skin, excited swelling not only in the part touched, but also over the face, eyelids and ears. This was the case with our author himself. A severe burning and itching continued for several days, and small vesicles, filled with a transparent sharp humour, formed in various places over his hands. Nearly the same symptoms occurred from touching the leaves.† I may add, that similar effects are very common in this country from touching this plant. Dr. Alderson even states, that sphacelation has followed, in some cases in England, of such parts of the skin as the acrid juice had touched.‡

The *Rhus vernix, venenata*, D. C. (poison sumach) produces similar effects. Blindness has been caused by merely hand-

* Christison, p. 532.

† Medical Commentaries, vol. 12, p. 110. "The juice of the *Rhus toxicodendron* produced enormous swellings on some labourers in the Jardin des Plantes, wherever it touched them." (Sage. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 9, p. 378.)

‡ Medical Commentaries, vol. 20, p. 10. Mr. Van Mons has advanced an opinion that the hurtful effects of this plant depend on a gas which it exhales, during the night or in the shade, rather than on its milky juice. He seems to have proved the irritating effects of this gas. Orfila, vol. 2, p. 42. We have, however, too great a mass of testimony proving the nature of the juice, to allow us to consider it innoxious. Dr. B. S. Barton's account of its effects on himself, is alone sufficient. It excited itching, swelling, and vesicles, which desquamated. (New-York Medical Repository, vol. 8, p. 200.)

ling it.* And Dr. Bigelow mentions, that he has known individuals badly poisoned in winter, from the wood of the rhus vernix accidentally burnt on the fire.†

Several other species of the rhus are poisonous, particularly the *R. pumila*, Mx. of Carolina, and the *R. veneficera*, D. C. *perniciosa*, Kunth.‡

Sedum acre, L. (Houseleek. Wall pepper.) This produced death when given internally, and the mucous membrane of the stomach was seen of a fiery red colour.

Rhododendron chrysanthum, Pall. The decoction of this plant has an acrid, burning taste; it is emetic, drastic, and inflames the texture to which it is applied. The *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, L. is said to be equally poisonous. Welsch speaks of a meal which became fatal to the guests, from having eaten of a hare which had been fed upon its leaves.

The *R. maximum*, L. (Pennsylvania mountain laurel. American rose bay) is, according to Dr. B. S. Barton, undoubtedly a poison.§

Cyclamen europæum, L. A violent cathartic, and it also excites vomiting. Bulliard states, that its root produces cold sweats, dizziness, and convulsive movements; the patient voids blood by vomiting and by stool; and a super-purgation supervenes, which proves fatal.

Plumbago europæa, L. Sauvages observes, that the workmen who make use of the decoction of this plant for the pur-

* See an account of the poison wood tree in New-England, by the Hon. Paul Dudley, F. R. S. (Philosophical Transactions, vol. 31, p. 145, and Dr. Cutler in Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. 1, p. 429.)

† Bigelow's Medical Botany, vol. 1, p. 109. Cases are related by Dr. Bigelow, p. 103 to 107, of the poisonous effects of the exhalations and juice of this plant. See also Dr. Horsfield's Inaugural Dissertation on the Rhus vernix, radicans and glabrum, 1798, in Caldwell's Medical Theses, vol. 1, p. 128.

On the treatment of the disease excited by these plants, and which is almost identical with the *diffuse inflammation* of Dr. Duncan junior, see Dr. Fountain in New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 5, p. 409; Dr. Christy in do. vol. 8, p. 21; Dr. Dakin in American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 4, p. 98; Boston Medical Magazine, vol. 1, p. 282; vol. 2, p. 75.

‡ The Indian varnishes appear to produce similar effects on the skin. One of them is made from the *Melanorrhæa usitata* of Wallich, the varnish tree of Munipur, and an allied plant to the rhus. Sir David Brewster received from Mr. Swinton several specimens, and it was found that the slightest touch to the skin induced swelling and great pain. One of the servants was nearly killed by the sylhet varnish. (Edinburgh Journal of Science, vol. 8, p. 101. Ibid. N. S. vol. 2, p. 71.)

§ Barton's Materia Medica, part 1, p. 18.

pose of obtaining a yellow dye, are tormented by a severe headache if they work longer than six hours. Its taste is acrid and almost caustic. Dulong has discovered a peculiar principle in the root, which is called *plumbagine*.*

Lobelia syphilitica, L. (Cardinal flower.) A native of the United States. This is an acrid plant, and acts as an emetic and purgative.

The *Lobelia longiflora*, L. possesses still more energetic properties. In Spain, according to Orfila, it is called *Rabienta cavallos*, because it kills horses.

Lobelia inflata, L. (Indian tobacco. Emetic weed. Eye-bright.) A native of the United States. This is a powerful emetic, and distressing and long continued sickness often accompanies its operation. "A melancholy instance of death occasioned by the use of this plant, in the hands of a quack, is detailed in the sixth volume of the Massachusetts Reports, in the trial of Samuel Thompson, an empiric practising in Beverly, for the murder of Ezra Lovett. In this trial, it appeared that the patient, being confined by a cold, sent for the pretended physician, who gave him three powders of lobelia in the course of half an hour, each of which vomited him violently, and left him in a great perspiration during the night. The next day two or more powders were administered, each of which operated by vomiting, and occasioned great distress. In like manner, two other powders were given the subsequent day, leaving the patient in a state of great prostration. Several days after this, the physician came again, and finding his patient still worse, administered several more powders, which occasioned great distress, and at length ceased to operate. Finding that the stomach was not sensible to the emetic effect of the lobelia, the physician repeated the dose, and when the patient complained of great distress at the breast, and said he was dying, the doctor assured him the medicine would soon get down, or operate as a cathartic. However, on the same evening, the patient lost his reason, and became convulsed, so that two men were required to hold him. To relieve which, the doctor forced down two more of his pow-

* Brande's Journal, vol. 6, p. 192.

ders, and the patient, as was to be expected, grew worse, and continued so until he expired.

The doctor, who had thus terminated the disease and the patient at once, was arrested and put upon trial for murder; but the homicide proving a legitimate one, from the want of a sufficient evidence of malice prepense, he was acquitted and set at liberty.”*

Horses and cattle have also been killed from eating this plant.

Professor Colhoun of Philadelphia, has made some experiments on the active principle of this plant.†

Pastinaca sativa, L. The root of this plant is said by Murray to have produced delirium, vertigo, heat at the stomach, and in the mouth and eyes, with tumefaction of the lips. It is a native of the United States.

Hydrocotyle vulgaris, Mx. (Marsh pennywort.) This plant has an acrid taste. It is a native of the United States.

Phytolacca decandra, L. (Poke. Pigeon berries.) A native of the United States. Its juice is acrid, and acts as a violent emetic and purgative. Prostration of strength and convulsions have also been induced by it. On a dog, to whom two ounces of the liquor distilled from the berries were given, Dr. Schultz of Pennsylvania, found it to produce nausea and drowsiness, with slight spasmodic motions, but no vomiting. This last is, however, a common effect.‡

Calla palustris, L. (Water arum.) A native of the United States. The root of this plant has a burning taste.

Arum maculatum, L. (Wake robin.) *A. dracunculus*, L. *dracontium*, L. *triphyllum*, L. and other species. The third and fourth are natives of the United States.

These are all acrid, and have produced dangerous effects. When the fresh root of the *A. maculatum* was given by Orfila to dogs, they died at the end of from twenty-four to thirty-six hours, without any other symptom than dejection, and the digestive canal was found somewhat inflamed. Bulliard

* Bigelow's American Botany, vol. 1, p. 131. Tyng's Massachusetts Reports, vol. 6, p. 134. Commonwealth v. Thompson.

† Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 5, p. 300

‡ Bigelow's American Medical Botany, vol. 1, p. 48.

relates the following case: "Three children ate of the leaves of this plant. They were seized with horrible convulsions, and with two of them all assistance was unavailing, as they could not be made to swallow any thing. They died, one at the expiration of twelve days, and another at the expiration of sixteen. The third was saved with difficulty. Its tongue was greatly swelled, and hence deglutition was painful and difficult."*

Sambucus ebulus, L. (Elder.) Dr. Christison saw a case of poisoning in a boy from eating the flowers and leaves. In a few hours, he was seized with griping and great tenderness of the abdomen, and these continued for three days, when medical advice was asked. It was now found to be a case of enteritis, which required active treatment, and on the fifth day from eating the leaves he passed them by stool. Another boy, who had eaten the flowers only, suffered under severe narcotic symptoms, and particularly giddiness.† The *S. nigra*, L. (dwarf elder,) has undoubtedly similar properties.

The *treatment* in cases where vegetable acrids have been taken, must be directed to the removal of the noxious substance, unless spontaneous vomiting occurs. Emetics are hence required in some cases. The diarrhœa consequent on irritation and inflammation of the mucous membrane of the intestines, must be considered as an active disease, and requires the antiphlogistic regimen. The most difficult and dangerous cases are those in which there is a general prostration of the powers of the system.

ANIMAL IRRITANTS—CANTHARIDES.

Cantharis vesicatoria. (Spanish fly.) Cantharides, according to Robiquet, consists of various substances; a green fluid oil; a black matter, soluble in water and insoluble in alcohol; a yellow matter, soluble in both; a fatty matter, insoluble in alcohol; phosphates of lime and magnesia; acetic and uric acids. None of these are vesicatory, but the epispastic principle is a white crystallizable substance, insoluble in water, (soluble, however, in it, when mixed with the yellow matter;)

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 83.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 73.

soluble in boiling alcohol and the oils. This is styled *Cantharidin*.*

We are, however, to treat of it as it is ordinarily administered, viz. in the form of powder and of tincture, and the usual symptoms are the following: When taken internally, cantharides excite a disagreeable and nauseating smell, acrid taste, retchings, copious vomitings, which are often tinged with blood, alvine evacuations, also more or less bloody, burning heat in the stomach and other parts, accompanied with griping and excruciating pains; great heat in the bladder, difficulty in making water, and the urine often bloody, sometimes totally suppressed; obstinate, and sometimes painful and excessive priapism, satyriasis, the pulse frequent and hard, while in some cases, the jaws are closed; and convulsions, general rigidity of the limbs, and delirium, precede the death of the patient.† All of these, however, are not always present, and very frequently “no venereal appetite is excited, sometimes even no affection of the urinary or genital organs at all, and the kidneys and bladder may be powerfully affected without the genital organs participating.”‡

In many instances this substance has been administered with a view to stimulate exhausted passions, or to accomplish the seduction of females. It will be seen from the above remarks, and from subsequent cases, how incorrect the common opinion among the vulgar may prove.

Julia Fontanelle relates the case of a person who, by mistake, took half an ounce of powdered cantharides. The result was burning pain in the throat, vomiting, ardor urinæ, and in a few hours, bloody urine and priapism. By the use

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 422. The experiments of Robiquet are quoted in detail in the Eclectic Repertory, vol. 2, p. 405. Previous to the examination of Robiquet, I believe, Beupoil had made some imperfect researches. (See his *Recherches Medico-Chimiques*.) For the latest observations on Cantharidin, see Carpenter, in Silliman's Journal, vol. 21; Thierry, London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 6, p. 318. Dr. Paris states that boiling the Spanish fly in water deprives it of its power of acting on the kidneys, (strangury) but does not diminish its vesicating powers. This has been confirmed by Dr. Bearly, of Philadelphia. (Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 4, p. 185.)

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 430; Le Clerc, p. 74; New England Journal, vol. 11, p. 18.

‡ Christison, p. 535.

of appropriate remedies, continued for some days, these symptoms gradually diminished, but it was a fortnight before he could leave the hospital.*

Other cases are quoted by Dr. Christison, from Biett and Rouquayrol. In these, in addition to the more common symptoms, there was difficulty of swallowing and violent tenesmus; and in the last, much salivation, and towards the end of the second day, a large cylindrical mass of the inner membrane of the gullet was discharged by vomiting.†

Four labourers, who found a flask of tincture of cantharides in a warehouse, and drank it for spirits, were seized with great heat and pain of the alimentary canal, vomiting of blood, impossibility of swallowing, a frequent small pulse, and coldness of the extremities. Dr. Graaf of Cologne, who visited them, used antiphlogistic and emollient remedies with success, but a distressing strangury continued in two of them for several days.‡

Dr. Ives, of New-York, relates of a youth aged seventeen, who, in a paroxysm of anger, swallowed an ounce of the tincture, supposing it to be laudanum. He was seen in an hour and a half afterwards. The respiration was hurried; there was profuse ptyalism, convulsive trembling, acute pain in the regions of the stomach and bladder, and such exquisite sensibility that the slightest pressure produced convulsions. Emetics and venesection were used, followed by mucilaginous drinks and castor oil. The convulsions occurred occasionally, accompanied with painful priapism. The proper remedies were continued, and although delirium interposed for a time, he appeared gradually to recover. On the seventh day, however, after taking it, he was seized with pain in the head, trembling, and universal spasms: coma followed. From this again he revived, and appeared to improve; but on the four-

* *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 8, p. 272, from *Revue Médicale*.

† Christison, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 34, p. 214. This patient was a fortnight in recovering.

‡ *London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 47, p. 437, from Hufeland's *Journal*. Two cases are related by Mr. Williams of Bewdley, (*Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter*, vol. 2, p. 360,) where the ordinary affections of the stomach and bladder occurred from taking some of the powder in raspberry brandy.

teenth day, violent convulsions recurred, followed by insensibility and death.*

There are two cases recorded, in which the administration of this substance was made the subject of a criminal prosecution. One (for the reference to which I am indebted to Dr. Paris) occurred in the reign of Elizabeth. One Vaux recommended its use to an impotent person, who died in consequence on the twenty-sixth day after taking it. Vaux, although he plead that he was not present at the taking of it, was found guilty, and sentenced to be hung.†

The other case occurred in 1825. A drachm of the powder had been given in some ale. It caused immediate vomiting; but ulceration of the tongue and throat, with copious salivation, pain and frequent desire to urinate, with febrile symptoms succeeded. The patient, however, recovered. On the trial, Dr. Dyce, of Aberdeen, stated that he had given ten grains of the powder of cantharides at a dose, as a medicinal prescription. The criminal was convicted.‡

The external application of cantharides sometimes gives rise to similar consequences, but in a more mitigated form.

As to its effects on animals, Orfila found, that when injected in the form of tincture into the jugular veins, it produced vertigo, stupor and death. The blood in the left ventricle of the heart was fluid and reddish; that in the right was black, and contained coagula. On using alcohol alone, however, he observed precisely the same effects. He then tried oil digested upon cantharides. The animal was soon deprived of sensibility and muscular power, and tetanus, convulsions, difficult respiration, and death supervened. The lungs were found very bulky, and distended with a great quantity of reddish serosity; in some parts, they were livid and compact. The mucous membrane of the bladder was slightly red, while that of the stomach and duodenum was natural. When cantharides in powder were introduced into the stomach, they produced vomiting, the discharge of much bloody mucus, pain, great dejection, extraordinary insensibility, and death. The mucous

* American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 1, p. 368.

† 4 Coke's Reports, p. 44.

‡ Dr. Torrie, London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 54, p. 463.

membrane of the stomach was of a fiery red; that of the duodenum less so, but also inflamed. The bladder was sometimes seen inflamed and thickened, and the œsophagus also was occasionally inflamed.*

As to the appearances on dissection in man, they are generally similar to those from other corrosive poisons—inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Fungous tubercles, erosions, and small ulcerations have also been noticed in these parts; the bladder has been inflamed or ulcerated, and in some cases the external organs of generation have been gangrenous.

In a fatal case mentioned by Orfila, where the powder had been taken for the purpose of suicide, the brain was gorged with blood; the omentum, peritoneum, gullet, stomach, intestines, kidneys, ureters, and internal organs of generation were inflamed, and the mouth and tongue were stripped of their lining membrane.

In Dr. Ives' case, the brain exhibited a similar appearance. The mucous membrane of the stomach was whiter than usual, pulpy, and easily detached. The kidney was also inflamed.†

If, on dissection, or in the matter vomited, any portion of this poison remain, it may be detected by its shining points, which are of a beautiful green colour. This, however, can only be hoped for when it has been taken in the form of powder. When the tincture has been administered, we cannot expect to identify the substance, and must rely solely on the symptoms and the dissection.

Barruel was recently requested to examine some chocolate, of which a whole family had become very ill. On the first view, it exhibited, when held in the light of the sun, numerous shining spots. He, however, tested it for mineral poisons, but could detect none. He then treated some of the powdered chocolate with sulphuric ether, and applied heat to the mixture: it was then filtered and evaporated. The whitish matter obtained, blistered the lips; and it presented the brilliant points so common in the powder of cantharides. To render

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 424.

† An interesting case, supposed to be of poisoning by cantharides, but probably referable to internal disease, is related by Dr. Hastings, in the Transactions of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, vol. 1, p. 462.

the fact more certain, he applied some of the adulterated chocolate to his arm by means of a compress: in six hours, it drew a blister.*

Treatment. Oil is recommended by Orfila, but later experiments have demonstrated its injurious effects. According to Dr. Pallas, it increases the danger. Cantharides macerated in cold oil, and afterwards given to dogs, was found to destroy them in a few minutes;† and this is owing to the oil dissolving the active principle. Mucilaginous drinks are preferable, to excite vomiting, and to remove the irritation from the bladder. The warm bath, friction, and diluents are proper; and the antiphlogistic treatment is necessary, when, as is usually the case, appearances of inflammation present themselves.

The *Lytta vittata*, (*Meloe americana*, potato fly,) and the many other allied species of our own country, appear to possess properties analogous to cantharides.‡ Some European insects have a similar character, as one or two species of *Bombyx*, and the *Mylabris variabilis*, or *chicorii*. Bretonneau found in this last a vesicating principle, identical probably with cantharadin.§

POISONOUS SERPENTS.

On these I intend to be very brief, and shall merely give a short notice of those that are found poisonous in other countries. Somewhat more of detail will be proper in reference to such as are peculiar to the United States.

The viper, (*Coluber berus*, *Vipera berus*,) is the most common poisonous serpent of England and the European continent. Its bite is not uniformly fatal to man or the larger animals, but the season of the year appears to increase its inten-

* Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 13, p. 455.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 19, p. 259. Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 5, p. 304.

‡ See the papers of Dr. Chapman and Dr. Woodhouse, in the New-York Medical Repository, vol. 2, p. 163; vol. 3, p. 213: of Dr. Schott, in Eclectic Repository, vol. 2, p. 193: of Dr. J. F. Dana, in Silliman's Journal, vol. 2, p. 137 — this contains an analysis of the potato fly, showing that cantharides exists in it. For an account of the numerous species found in this country, see New-England Journal, vol. 13, p. 243; Say's Entomology, and his paper on the Coleoptera, in the 3d vol. of the Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences; Dr. Barton's Materia Medica; and Durand in Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 2, p. 276.

§ Bulletin des Sciences Médicales, vol. 14, p. 92.

sity, being most venomous in summer. The symptoms are acute pain in the part wounded, which extends over the limbs, and even to the external organs; tumefaction and redness, which afterwards passes to a livid colour; syncope, frequent, small, concentrated and irregular pulse; difficulty of breathing, copious and cold sweats, disturbance of vision and of the intellectual faculties, bilious and convulsive vomitings, and followed generally by yellowness of the skin. Gangrene is apt to occur in the wound, when the disease is about to terminate.*

The *poisonous snakes of India* have been noticed by Russel in a great work, and his experiments are still the most valuable we yet have on the subject.† Notices are interspersed in abundance in various literary and scientific works, concerning the venomous serpents of other countries.‡

In general, the animal is most poisonous, and its effects most rapidly destructive, in warm climates. Hence the serpents of India and South America are distinguished above all others for their venomous nature.

Dr. Harlan, in his *Genera of North American Reptilia*, enumerates the following as the poisonous serpents of this country:

Crotalus durissus, Banded rattlesnake. Northern and Middle States.

Crotalus horridus, Diamond rattlesnake. Southern States, Antilles.

Crotalus miliaris, Ground or little rattlesnake. Southern States.

Crotalus confluentis, *Say*. Rocky Mountains.

Crotalus tergestinus, *Say*. Western Territories.

Cenchrus mockeson, Hog-nose snake, Mockeson.

Vipera fulvia. Southern States.

Scytale piscivorus, Water viper. South-Carolina.§

To these, if not included above, must be added the Copper-head, called

* On the effects of the venom of the viper, see Morgagni, vol. 3. p. 410. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 380. Edinburgh Medical Essays, vol. 6, p. 420. Fontana in Philosophical Transactions, vol. 70, p. 163. Redi in do. vol. 1, p. 160. Atwell in do. vol. 39, p. 394. Also London Medical Repository, vol. 14, p. 522—Configliacci's experiments. New-England Journal, vol. 6, p. 311—Mangili's experiments.

† An analysis of these is contained in Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 387 to 403.— See also the Eclectic Repertory, vol. 2, p. 318; and Dr. Rankin's experiments in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 18, p. 231. Also the Asiatic Researches, and Transactions of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta.

‡ An extraordinary case is related by Dr. Pascalis, in the New-York Medical Repository, vol. 19, p. 78, of an individual who was bitten by a snake at St. Domingo. He survived the effects many years, but the leg and thigh swelled to an enormous size, and this remained permanent until his death. The only relief he experienced, was to open one or other of the capillary vessels on the swelling, and discharge four or five ounces of blood from it.

§ Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, vol. 5, p. 364, &c.

Boa crotaloides by Professor Gibson, and *Scytalus cupreus* by Rafinesque.*

Crotalus horridus, and *durissus*. (The rattlesnake.) This is probably the most venomous snake known in our country, but its effects vary greatly; and this is doubtless, as has been suggested by Sir Everard Home, owing to the greater or less intensity of the poison.

"When the poison is very active, the local irritation is so sudden and violent, and its effects on the general system are so great, that death soon takes place. On examination after death, the only alteration of structure met with, is in the parts close to the bite, where the cellular membrane is completely destroyed, and the neighbouring muscles are very considerably inflamed.

"When the poison is less intense, the shock to the general system does not prove fatal. It brings on a slight degree of delirium, and the pain in the part bitten is very severe; in about half an hour, swelling takes place from the effusion of serum in the cellular membrane, which continues to increase with greater or less rapidity for about twelve hours, extending during that period into the neighbourhood of the bite; the blood ceases to flow in the smaller vessels of the swollen parts; the skin over them becomes quite cold; the action of the heart is so weak that the pulse is scarcely perceptible, and the stomach is so irritable that nothing is retained on it. In about sixty hours, these symptoms go off; inflammation and suppuration take place in the injured parts; and when the abscess formed is very great, it proves fatal.† When the bite has been in the finger, that part has immediately mortified. When death has taken place under such circumstances, the absorbent vessels and their glands have undergone no effects similar to morbid poisons, nor has any part lost its natural appearance, except those immediately connected with the abscess.

* Silliman's Journal, vol. 1, p. 84. Say would seem to consider the mockeson and copper-head identical. (Ibid. vol. 1, p. 256.)

† A case strongly illustrative of this class of symptoms, is related by Mr. Bretnal of Philadelphia, the actual sufferer himself, in the Philosophical Transactions, vol. 44, p. 147. He survived the bite and recovered, but an abscess formed several months afterwards in the injured part.

In those patients who recover, the symptoms go off more readily and more completely than those produced by a morbid poison, which has been received into the system.*

A case is related by Sir Everard Home, which illustrates the above views. Thomas Soper, aged twenty-six, was accidentally bitten twice in the hand by a rattlesnake. The snake was kept for the purpose of exhibition in London.

The first symptom observed was an incoherence in language and behaviour, resembling intoxication. In less than half an hour, the hand began to swell; next the fore-arm, and afterwards the pain extended to the axilla. In two hours after the bite, Mr. Brodie saw him. The skin was cold, the man's answers incoherent, his pulse one hundred in a minute, and he complained of sickness. Ammonia and ether were exhibited internally, and applied to the wound. He rejected the first draught, but retained the second. Fits of fainting supervened, with coldness of the skin. On the next day, blood was extravasated under the skin as low as the loins, and vesications had formed on the wounded arm. Depression and faintings continued. These symptoms were present for several days, with greater or less severity. The arm sloughed in various places, and abscesses formed, accompanied with purging. Finally, mortification and delirium occurred, and he died on the fourth of November, 1807, eighteen days after being bitten.

On dissection, the body externally was found natural, with the exception of the arm that had been bitten. The wounds made by the fangs were healed; the lungs were healthy; the cavities of the heart contained coagulated blood; the cardiac portion of the stomach was moderately distended with fluid, while the pyloric portion was much contracted; the internal membrane had its vessels very turgid with blood. The intestines and liver were healthy. The vessels of the brain were turgid, and water was effused in it.†

Mr. Drake, a person who took rattlesnakes from this country for exhibition in England and France, was unfortunately bitten by one in Paris. He died in nine hours. On dissec-

* Home in *Philos. Transactions* for 1810. *Eclectic Repertory*, vol. 1, p. 320.

† *Eclectic Repertory*, vol. 1, p. 312.

tion, all the internal organs were found healthy, except that the membrane covering the brain and spinal cord, had a reddish tinge, and the venous blood on the affected side was curdled or clotted.*

Dr. Harlan, in a case where death ensued in about twenty-four hours, found the usual external appearances, the blood-vessels of the head filled, the spinal cord healthy, the mucous membrane of the stomach of a red pink, owing to the loaded state of its vessels, and marks of inflammation in the mucous membrane of the intestines.†

The effects of the bite of the rattlesnake on animals, are so well known, and in general, resemble so closely those produced on man, that it is not necessary to recapitulate them.‡

The mockeson and copper head snakes are equally venomous with the rattlesnake.§

As to antidotes, and the treatment proper for bitten persons, we may remark, that these are numerous and diversified. Humboldt and Bonpland mention a New Grenada plant, the *Guaco* (*Mikiana guaco*), the juice of which seems to deter snakes from biting persons on whom it is applied, and even when they are bitten, the application of the leaves prevents the usual effect.||

Arsenite of potash. (Fowler's solution,) has been used with great success by Mr. Ireland, in the West Indies, to counteract the effects of the bites of snakes.¶ The Pill of Tanjore, also an arsenical preparation, was sometimes used by Dr. Russel with apparent success on animals; but several, how-

* Edinburgh Journal of Science, vol. 7, p. 86.

† American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 8, p. 397.

‡ See on this point, Philosophical Transactions, vol. 35, p. 309, 377. Dr. B. S. Barton mentions two cases of rabbits bitten by rattlesnakes. One recovered gradually in three days, the other died in 74 minutes. On dissection, the great curvature of the stomach was seen inflamed. Around the bite, blood was effused, and the solids were in a gelatinous, bloody state. (Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, part 1, p. 167.) Harlan in American Philosophical Transactions, N. S. vol. 3, p. 300.

§ Cases are given by Dr. Brickell in New-York Medical Repository, vol. 8, p. 441, by Dr. Drake (cured by cupping and ammonia) in Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences, vol. 1, p. 60.

|| Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 441. See also a translation of a Spanish tract on this plant, from the Jamaica Physical Journal, in United States Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 66. Silliman's Journal, vol. 24, p. 280, 382; vol. 27, p. 171.

¶ Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 2, p. 396.

ever, to whom it was administered, died in the same way as if nothing had been taken.*

Ammonia, and *Eau de Luce* have many testimonies in their favor, while some, as Sir Everard Home and Orfila, doubt their specific virtues.† They are, however, useful in promoting perspiration. Alcohol in large and repeated doses (in the form of whiskey, &c.) has also been used.‡

Besides these, many plants have acquired a temporary reputation in our own country and in South America. Of the former, are the *Aristolochia serpentaria*, *Prenanthes alba*, and *Polygala senega*; and in South America, the *Eupatorium ayaparia*, the *Algalia* or *Yerba del sapo*, and the *Raiz preta*.§

The *Uvularia grandiflora* has very decisive testimony in its favor,|| and the *Hieraceum venosum* has lately been offered as an antidote, but its effects are not superior to many other plants already noticed.¶

* Orfila's Toxicology vol. 2, p. 446. See also New-York Medical Repository, vol. 7, p. 12. Dr. Phillips American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 8, p. 540. Dr. Miller of Ohio. Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 9, p. 240.

† Testimonies in favor of these may be found in the Medical Commentaries, vol. 14, p. 297. London Medical Repository, vol. 8, p. 73. New-York Medical Repository, vol. 9, p. 109. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 18, p. 231. London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 29, p. 120, Dr. D. Ramsay, a case cured by ammonia. Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine, vol. 17, p. 125. Numerous cases of the bite of the rattlesnake and mockeson, are said to have been cured by ammonia, by Dr. Moore of Mississippi, and Dr. Heustis of Alabama. American Journal of Medical Science, vol. 1, p. 341; vol. 8, p. 83.

‡ See two cases of the bite of the rattlesnake cured by it in American Medical Recorder, vol. 6, p. 619

§ Dr. Brickell states, that *Prenanthes alba* is a famous Indian cure for the bite of serpents. (Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 2, part 1, p. 101.) On the *Prenanthes altissima*, (*Harpalyce altissima*, of Don.) See Dr. James Hubble, New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 4, p. 484.

Dr. Barton's paper in the American Philosophical Transactions, vol. 3, p. 100, contains a long list of supposed vegetable antidotes.

On the *Eupatorium ayaparia*, see New-York Medical Repository, vol. 7, p. 16; and Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine, vol. 21, p. 286.

On the *Algalia*, New-England Journal, vol. 3, p. 322.

On the *Raiz petra*, (*Chiococca racemosa*, Kabinca) of Brazil, Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 1, p. 218; Dr. S. L. Mitchill, New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 8, p. 208; Spix and Von Martius' travels, vol. 2, p. 131. Dr. Baxter of New-York, has translated the chemical researches of Pelletier and Caventou on this substance. (New-York Medical Journal, vol. 1, p. 164.)

|| See Mr. Tracy's paper in the Transactions of the Albany Institute, vol. 1, p. 32. New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 7, p. 65.

¶ See Dr. Harlan's experiments in the Transactions of American Philosophical Society, N. S. vol. 3, p. 300 and 400. Dr. Harlan mentions that the state of South

Caustics are valuable, but often prove ineffectual, and the treatment at present most relied on, is the use of *cupping glasses*, and the application of ligatures above the part bitten, but not too tight, nor too long continued. Then cauterize the wound with lunar caustic, and afterwards apply compresses to the part. Perspiration and sleep should be encouraged by small doses of ammonia, wine or ether, and the patient should be kept in bed well covered. Local inflammation must be combatted by the usual means.

In many cases, there is no doubt that if left to nature, they would cure themselves, with however more or less of local diffuse inflammation.*

The *Scorpion* is most venomous in southern countries. Instances are recorded, of its sting producing grievous local inflammation, and occasionally fever, trembling and pain, on man, in France and Italy. Animals, as dogs and cats, generally survive, though some have died from its poison.†

The *Tarantula* produces similar effects, local rather than general, and the fabulous stories respecting it are now well understood and duly appreciated. It would seem, however, that there are species whose sting may prove fatal. Dr. Grapeton states, that he saw two fatal cases in the Crimea; one proved so in forty-eight hours, another in six days. The first was that of a peasant, who was stung while sleeping in his hut. The sting was soon very painful, his neck swelled, and the respiration became difficult forty-four hours after the accident. On the right side of the neck, there was a brownish violet mark, the neck, head and shoulders were swelled, and

Carolina bought from a negro the secret of a supposed antidote, at the expense of his freedom and an annuity of £100. It proved to be the *Alisma plantago*.

Dr. Williams of Massachusetts, has lately mentioned the *Viola ovata* as a cure. *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 13, p. 310.

Besides these, many other remedies have apparently proved successful. Oil has been thus given. (*New-York Medical Repository*, vol. 2, p. 242.) A living fowl applied to the wound. (*Silliman's Journal*, vol. 1, p. 259.)

Most of these illustrate the remark of Sir Everard Home, that "the violent effects which the poison produces on the part bitten, and on the general system, and the shortness of their duration, have frequently induced the belief, that the recovery depended upon the medicines employed."

* I copy this remark from Dr. Harlan, who makes it at the conclusion of an interesting case, in *North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 11, p. 227. See also Hancock on snake poisons. (*Brande's Journal*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 330.)

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 411.

the thorax from the clavicle to the false ribs, was of a bluish colour. Scarifications, the actual cautery, oil externally and internally, and ammonia, were all tried in vain.*

The bite of the *Spider* is also said to cause local inflammation with local irritation. Several severe cases are recorded.†

The sting of the *bee*, the *humble-bee*, the *wasp*, and the *hornet*, have each occasionally produced dangerous and alarming symptoms. Inflammation more or less extensive has followed, and if the part injured be a sensitive one, great misery is produced. Several cases of this nature are cited by Orfila, and in a cotemporary journal a remarkable instance is mentioned, where the sting of a bee excited vomiting, fainting, sweating, trembling, and great difficulty of breathing. The patient had been stung on the back of the left middle finger, but it caused little pain and no swelling.‡

A species of wasp, (*Vespa crabro*. Yellow jacket,) stung a ploughman when at work. It caused insensibility and convulsive twitchings for several hours, nor did he recover until active stimulants were used.§

The sting of the scorpion, bee or wasp, requires, according to its violence, internal or external remedies. Generally, emollient anodyne applications to the injured part, are sufficient to allay the irritation, after extracting the sting. The volatile alkali is also a valuable medicine to be administered in severe cases.

POISONOUS FISHES.||

Numerous cases are on record, proving the poisonous nature of various species of fish, and particularly in the West

* Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 1. p. 215.

† Dr. Jennings, Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 3, p. 277. A fatal case, possibly from it. Dr. Lawrence. Chapman's Journal, vol. 1, p. 259.

There is a list of North American spiders, by Mr. Hentz, in Silliman's Journal, vol. 21, p. 103.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 414. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 8, p. 130. See also Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 7, p. 150. American Medical Recorder, vol. 11, p. 202. Silliman's Journal, vol. 16, p. 182.

§ In the English Cabinet Annual Register for 1833, is the following, under the date of June 14. "Dr. King of Stratford-on-Avon, died in consequence of a sting which he received on the 8th inst. from a hornet."

§ Dr. Littel; Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences, vol. 4, p. 192.

|| For the purpose of abbreviating my references, and at the same time giving a view of the authorities to which I have referred, I will cite the following papers on

Indies. Dr. Burrows has given us a catalogue of such, which it may be useful to quote. *Balistes monoceros*, (*old wife*.) *Ostracion globellum*, (*smooth bottle-fish*.) *Tetrodon sceleratus*, (*tunny*.) *Tetrodon ocellatus*, (*blower or blazer*.) *Muræna major*, (*conger eel*.) *Coryphæna splendens*, (*dolphin*.) *Sparus chrysops*, (*porgee*.) *Coracinus fuscus major*, (*grey snapper*.) *Coracinus minor*, (*hyne*.) *Perca major* of Browne, (*Esox barracuda*, *barracuda*.) *Perca venenata*, (*rock-fish*.) *Perca venenosa* of Catesby, (*grooper*.) *Scomber maximus*, (*xiphias of Browne*, *king-fish*.) *Scomber thynnus*, (*bonetta*.) Another species of scomber, (*cavallœ*, *horse-eye*.) *Scomber cæruleo argenteus nudus*, of Browne, (*Spanish mackerel*.) *Mormyra* of Browne, (*blue parrot-fish*.) *Clupea thryssa*, (*yellow-billed sprat*.) *Cancer astacus*, (*sea lobster*.) *Cancer ruficollis*, (*land crab*.) *Mytilus edulis*, (*muscle*.)*

Of all these, the clupea (*yellow-billed sprat*) is the most active and dangerous; and the usual course of symptoms from it is the following: itching over the whole body, violent colic pain, a contraction and pungent heat of the œsophagus, nausea, heat of the skin and great acceleration of the pulse, giddiness, loss of sight, cold sweats, insensibility, and death. Sometimes the disease is uncommonly rapid, convulsions ensue immediately after swallowing the fish, and death is a speedy consequence. Indeed, whites and negroes have both been known to expire at St. Eustatius, and other of the Leeward islands, with the sprats in their mouths unswallowed.†

fish poison. Dr. Chisholm, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 4, p. 393. Dr. Burrows, in *London Medical Repository*, vol. 3, p. 445. Dr. E. Thomas, in *Memoirs of the Medical Society of London*, vol. 5, p. 94. Dr. Meyer, in *Barton's Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 43. Mr. Quarrier, in *London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 25, p. 398. *Mariner's Tonga Islands*, vol. 1, p. 309, London edition. Mr. Anderson, in *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 56, p. 544. *Orfila*, vol. 2, p. 417. Dr. Dickson, in *Annals of Philosophy*, vol. 11, p. 462. Dr. Clarke of Dominica, in *Medical Facts and Observations*, vol. 7, p. 294. Dr. Combe of Leith, on the poisonous effects of the mussel, (*mytilus edulis*), *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 29, p. 86. Dr. Henderson, *ibid.* vol. 34, p. 317. *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales*, vol. 43. Art. *Poissons dangereux*, by H. Cloquet. Of these, the papers of Drs. Chisholm, Burrows and Combe, are particularly deserving of perusal.

* Various other species of poisonous fishes in different parts of the world are enumerated in the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*. Art. *Ichthyology*.

† Chisholm, p. 395.

This, however, is said to be the only fish which produces *immediate* death, even within the tropics.

The grey snapper produces cholera morbus and excruciating pain, with efflorescence, and is apt to leave a weakness of the lower extremities, dimness of sight, and dulness of hearing.

These are also the ordinary results, with, however, some variety, that are experienced from the use of the various kinds enumerated in the preceding catalogue. The contraction and heat of the œsophagus does not occur in some cases, but in its place there is an excessive heat of the mouth and tongue. A miliary eruption, or an efflorescence over the whole body, is also very common, producing sometimes an exfoliation of the epidermis.*

The cause of this poison has been the subject of much ingenious research. Dr. Chisholm inclined to the idea, that it was owing to the fish feeding on copper banks. He would seem, however, to have abandoned this, as on chemical examination, a portion of the argillaceous stone of Antigua was found not to contain any; but a precipitate was obtained, possessing the qualities of sulphate of barytes.†

Dr. Burrows has investigated this question with great ability. He is of opinion that the poison does not exist in the skin, or in the stomach and intestinal canal, or in the liver and gall-bladder exclusively, although there is no doubt that persons have been poisoned from eating these various parts. *It pervades the whole substance of the fish*, and this is abundantly proved by the statements of Dr. Chisholm, and the numerous authorities adduced by him. As to its origin, he discusses the cupreous theory of Dr. Chisholm, and shows the great improbability of the metal being held in solution in the sea-water. The fact also, that land-crabs occasionally produce similar symptoms, is further urged against this opinion. The idea that other substances taken as food by fish, may be the cause of their poisonous nature, is shown to be unfounded. He concludes with advancing and establishing the belief, that a morbid change takes place in the system of the fish.

* Thomas.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 5, p. 13.

And this is particularly to be expected in those taken from the tropical seas, as they are immediately exposed to a high temperature, and putrefaction must commence with the extinction of life, and proceed with intense rapidity.*

Treatment. An emetic (of sulphate of zinc,) or cathartic, should be immediately administered, according to the time that has elapsed since the ingestion of the poisonous substance. If, however, the spontaneous vomiting or purging be very great, it may sometimes be necessary to check it by anodynes. These are also proper when spasms supervene. And

* Burrows. See also *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine*, vol. 4. Art. *Urticaria*, by Dr. Houghton.

I add the following, as it contains the observations of an acute and learned observer.

"Jan. 18, 1819. A paper was read by Dr. Ferguson, before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 'On the poisonous fish of the Caribbee Islands.'

"The author endeavoured to prove, that in all the larger fishes of prey, the poisonous quality was a rare and accidental occurrence, and that it was found to be present only at certain seasons of the year in one or two of the smaller species of fish, more particularly in the yellow-billed sprat, (the *Sardine doré* of the French, and *Clupea thryssa* of naturalists.) From whence he inferred that the larger voracious fishes, such as the baracosta, (*Perca major* of naturalists,) &c. became poisonous only at the times they had recently been preying upon the smaller poisonous prey. The notion of their being made poisonous from being found in copper banks, or their eating the stinging blubbers, (the medusæ and holothuria,) was refuted. In regard to tests, it was shown that none could be depended upon; that nothing whatever could be discovered from inspection of the fish; that the boasted test of boiling a piece of silver with the suspected fish, proved nothing, whatever might be its actual quality; that so far from there being any marks of disease in the viscera, or other parts of poisonous fishes, they were found to be in the best season, and of the highest quality in all respects.

"The poison of the yellow-billed sprat was supposed to be inherent in the animal at certain seasons of the year, and not occasioned by its being fed upon any undiscovered local marine poison, from the circumstance of the other smaller fishes that were found in the same place, never partaking of the same poisonous nature, and from the poison of the fish being more potent and deadly than any known or even supposable article of food could be likely to communicate.

"With respect to remedies or antidotes, the efficacy of sugar was alone established as deserving of credit. Wines, spirits, and the condiments used at table, were believed to have obtained occasional credit, only from being used in such slight cases of the poison as would likely have passed away without any remedy. As a precaution in all cases of suspicious fish of the larger species, the cleaning them out as soon as caught, was recommended as a useful and proper one, to prevent the carcase being farther tainted by the lodgement of any poisonous matter (such as that of the yellow-billed sprat) recently swallowed; though it was shown at the same time that the doing so, and even salting the fish afterwards, could not in any instance do away with the poisonous impregnation so communicated to these voracious creatures, whose powers of assimilation, from the shortness of the intestines and great size of the liver, must be supposed to be infinitely quicker than what takes place among terrestrial animals. It was useful also, in a more humble way, by furnishing the material of the only criterion hitherto discovered for detecting the poison, which was shown to be that of giving a portion of the liver or offal to some inferior animal, such as a cat, a duck, or a pig, and ascertaining its effects upon them, before making use of the fish." (*Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, vol. 1, p. 194.)

for the sequelæ, Dr. Chisholm advises a solution of alkalies in water. Sugar, containing a few drops of sulphuric ether, has also been recommended; and there are many cases in which the nervous system is so weakened, as to need active and repeated stimuli.

Some of the fish taken on the coast of England would seem to possess poisonous qualities. Thus the *trachinus draco* (weaver) has the power of stinging with its dorsal fin so violently, as to cause numbness and violent swelling.*

Mussels sometimes produce symptoms very analogous to those just related, and death has occasionally been the consequence in weak females and in children. Violent oppression and agony, swelling of the face, a scarlet efflorescence over the body, insatiable thirst, tormina and vomiting, are the usual effects; and in fatal cases, coldness of the extremities, low and quick pulse, hiccup, delirium and occasional coma.†

The most copious account that we have of these is by Dr. Combe of Leith, as already quoted. In June, 1827, a number of persons (probably thirty) were seized in that town with similar symptoms, varying, however, in severity, from eating mussels. Heat and thirst in the mouth, great desire to pass urine, small and weak pulse, some difficulty in swallowing, twitchings and great weakness, were the most common symptoms. Two aged persons died without being seen by a medical man, but emetics and laxatives, followed by stimuli, generally relieved the disease in the rest.‡ The dissection of the above individuals was hurried and imperfect. The abdomen in each was tympanitic, the stomach healthy, the intestines suffused in some places, and the bladder distended.

These mussels were collected from a bar at the dock gates, which had floated there for twenty years, and on being drawn

* Annals of Philosophy, N. S., vol. 6, p. 301. Christison, p. 541.

† Two fatal cases from eating mussels, by Dr. Burrows, in London Medical Repository, vol. 3, p. 445. Instances are also related in Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 419, and Foderé, vol. 4, p. 85.

‡ One patient, however, had violent gastric symptoms, followed by peritonitis, which required the free use of the lancet. Foderé relates a similar case, which proved fatal, and on dissection the stomach and intestines were seen inflamed. (Vol. 4, p. 85.)

up, was found thickly encrusted with them. The wood was sound; the fish appeared fresh and healthy; nor could Dr. Christison discover any deleterious impregnation, after the most careful chemical examination. Dr. Combe agrees with Dr. Burrows in believing the cause to be a poison *sui generis*, pervading the animal.*

A case of a choleroïd affection that occurred at London in 1833, is given by Dr. T. Thompson. It was unaccompanied with cramp or itching, but the patient sunk under it. On dissection, the mucous membrane of the stomach was of a bright red throughout, and a hæmorrhagic spot at its pyloric extremity; the intestines had a similar appearance; the peritoneum was reddened. It appears that four days previous to his illness, he had eaten a pint of mussels boiled for supper. The next day, he was seized with great weakness, and diarrhœa soon followed.†

The *oyster*, *lobster*, *crab* and *mackerel* of our New-York market, have each occasionally produced poisonous effects.‡ Some years since, a quantity of oysters arrived in the month of September at Dunkirk, from Normandy. They were extensively purchased and eaten; and colic, diarrhœa and cholera morbus immediately prevailed to a great extent. It was supposed that the oysters were the cause, and Dr. Zandyck was commissioned to inquire into the subject. He found that many of these animals contained water which left a slimy deposit, and had a decidedly brackish taste; and he suggested that the mischief might be owing to the weakness and languor of the oyster, which had not sufficiently animalized the contained sea-water.§

The treatment, in all these cases, must be similar to that already advised as to poisonous fishes generally.

A case is reported of disease caused by eating a portion of the liver of the halibut, a fish quite common off the harbour of

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 86.

† London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 3, p. 179.

‡ A case of poisonous effects from a crab, supervening in fifteen minutes after eating it, is mentioned in the New-York Medical Repository, vol. 12, p. 189. The newspapers (August 1835) contain an account of twelve persons in Maryland, dead after a repast on crabs.

§ London Medical Repository, vol. 13, p. 58.

New-York. The patient was seized with pain, nausea, vomiting and headache; and shortly thereafter, the skin began to exfoliate from his face, and successively from every part of the body. In this condition, he was admitted into the New-York Hospital. The disease yielded to diaphoretics and the warm bath.*

The *Physalia* is a remarkable molluscous animal, inhabiting the tropical seas, and known to sailors under the name of the *Portuguese man of war*. Many scientific individuals speak of the pungent pain and irritation produced by handling them. Their tentacula twine round the hand or body, and the acrid exudation that issues produces the severe effects.†

As to the venomous nature of the *Toad*, various and contradictory opinions have existed: it is doubted at the present day, though formerly it was believed. King John of England is supposed to have been poisoned by a drink, in which matter from a living toad had been infused. Pelletier has analyzed the venom of the common toad, and states it to consist of an acid, a very bitter and even caustic fat matter, and an animal matter having some analogy to gelatine.‡ Dr. John Davy describes it as extremely acrid when applied to the tongue, but innoxious to a chicken when inoculated with it.§

The *Pheasant* of this State and Pennsylvania, (or *Partridge* as it is sometimes styled,) is deemed poisonous during the winter and spring; and the cause assigned for it, is its feeding on the buds of the laurel, (*Kalmia latifolia*,) which is one of the few shrubs which preserve their verdure throughout the cold season. The facts that we have on this subject are not numerous, but the impression is notwithstanding a general, and probably a safe one. Dr. Mease has published several cases, which occurred in 1791 and 1792, in Philadelphia, where

* Dr. A. C. Post, New-York Medical Journal, vol. 1, p. 101.

† See Bennet and Mayer, quoted in the London Quarterly Review, vol. 52, p. 4 and 163. London Medical Gazette, vol. 8, p. 679. Abel's Journey to China, p. 59. I have omitted a notice of the *Ornithorynchus paradoxus* in this edition, as we are now led to believe that its spur is not poisonous.

‡ London Medical Repository, vol. 9, p. 168. A case somewhat similar to the one mentioned in the text, is contained in Valentini's Pandects, vol. 1, p. 554, "*De diarrhoea lethali a talpa (mole) potu ordinario injecta.*" The answer of the Medical Faculty of Giessen, discountenancing this idea, and attributing it to horror, is also given

§ Annals of Philosophy, N. S. vol. 11, p. 137, 277.

individuals dining on pheasants solely, were, in a few hours after, seized with giddiness, violent flushings of heat and cold, sickness at stomach, and repeated vomiting. These symptoms were soon succeeded by delirium, weak pulse and extreme debility; while some cases were marked by the preservation of the senses, but a total inability to articulate. They were generally relieved by emetics, diluents and mild stimulants. One case of death ensued, but there were so many causes combining, that it would be improper to ascribe it to the food alone.*

In a case that occurred to Dr. Drake, also in the winter, vertigo, deadly sickness at the stomach, with extreme languor and exhaustion, suddenly attacked the patient. The pupils were dilated, no pulse was present in the arms or temple, and excruciating pain in the stomach, with a disposition to vomit, next supervened. An emetic somewhat relieved these, but tenesmus and griping remained for sometime, and he very gradually recovered.†

In two other cases occurring in the same family, and where the symptoms were similar to the above, the place where the bird had been prepared for the spit was examined, and a number of the leaves of the laurel were found. This occurred in February, 1826.‡

Poisonous Honey. It has long been known that honey is occasionally poisonous. Many of the ancient writers contain facts on this subject, and in particular, a number of the Greek soldiers during the retreat of the ten thousand, are said to have been violently affected by some they had eaten near Trebisond.§ I will only notice at this time, the effects that

* Mease, in New-York Medical Repository, vol. 1, p. 153. Barton, in American Philosophical Transactions, vol. 5, p. 60. The opinion has been long entertained, that the food of animals may become poisonous from feeding on noxious substances. A number of authors are quoted to this effect in Schlegel, vol. 3, p. 134; and among other remarks, it is stated that birds feeding on darnel have proved noxious.

† New-York Medical Repository, vol. 21, p. 460.

‡ Dr. Shoemaker of Philadelphia, in North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 321.

§ On the knowledge of the ancients concerning poisonous honey, see Dr. B. S. Barton's paper, in the American Philosophical Transactions, vol. 5, p. 65 to 68, and Foderè, vol. 4, p. 290.

Mr. Keith E. Abbot, in a letter to the Zoological Society of London, dated Trebisond, December 10, 1833, says that the bees are supposed to feed from the *Azalea*

have been produced in our own country, and their probable causes.

Dr. Barton, in the paper already noticed, states that a party of adventurers removed some hives of bees from Pennsylvania to New-Jersey, in the hope that the savannahs of the latter country might be favourable to the increase of these animals, and consequently to the making of honey. They accordingly placed them in the above situations, and where the kalmia was the principal flowering shrub. The bees increased prodigiously, and their enterprize appeared successful; but it was soon found that every one who ate of the honey, became intoxicated to a high degree. It was then made into metheglin, but with a similar effect on those who partook of it.

The usual symptoms are dimness of sight, or vertigo, succeeded by a delirium, which is sometimes mild and pleasant and sometimes ferocious, ebriety, pain in the stomach and intestines, convulsions, profuse perspiration, foaming at the mouth, vomiting and purging, and in a few instances, death. Sometimes vomiting is among the earliest symptoms, and in that case, the patient is readily relieved, although a temporary weakness of the limbs is not an uncommon result.*

Dr. Hosack has recorded two cases, in which this substance produced violent vomiting, cold extremities and a livid appearance of the countenance. The pulse was reduced to about twenty in a minute. The spontaneous vomiting, however, being followed by a dose of castor oil, together with the application of fomentations, relieved the sufferers. In these instances, the honey was of a dark reddish colour, and a thicker consistence than is usually sold in the market.†

pontica; "that plant growing in abundance in this part of the country, and its blossoms emitting the most exquisite odour. The effect which it has on those who eat is, as I have myself witnessed, precisely that which Xenophon describes. When taken in a small quantity it causes violent headache and vomiting, and the unhappy individual who has swallowed it, resembles as much as possible, a tipsy man; a larger dose will completely deprive him of all sense and power of moving for some hours afterwards." (London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 5, p. 314.

* Barton *ut antea*, vol. 5, p. 52.

† Hosack's Medical and Philosophical Register, vol. 3, p. 390. Mr. A. De St. Hilaire found some poisonous honey in Brazil, which proved hurtful to himself and several of his party. (Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 14, p. 91.)

From the facts mentioned above, Dr. Barton is of opinion that the poisonous nature of the honey is owing to the bees feeding on venomous plants—as the various species of kalmia, the andromeda mariana, which is destructive to sheep; the rhododendron; the azalea nudiflora, and the datura. He recommends that every fœtid or poisonous vegetable should be removed from the habitations of these animals.

Besides the poisons now considered, there are others enumerated by systematic writers, which I defer noticing until I commence the investigation of MEDICAL POLICE. Of this description are *poisonous animals, used as food*, as oxen, sheep, &c. in whom the fluids have been depraved by disease, and *rabies* (hydrophobia.) I shall conclude this division of the subject with a few remarks on the danger of *wounds received in dissection*.

The accidents to which anatomists are exposed in the prosecution of their studies, are divided by Baron Percy into two classes; those resulting from the putrid gases extricated from the dead animal matters, and acting on the system generally, and those from inoculation of a septic principle, in wounds. I propose noticing the second only.

The instances that are recorded are marked by a train of symptoms peculiarly malignant, and often suddenly fatal. Dr. Chambon pricked his middle finger with the sphæroid bone of a skull, that had been long macerating. He was soon after seized with the most intolerable pain, and inflammatory swelling of the fingers and hands. At another time, from a similar cause, the mental faculties were disordered, the pulse was irregular, and extreme debility was present.

Corvisart, while examining a dead body, pricked his finger. The arm immediately swelled to an enormous size, and it was only by making repeated and deep incisions into the tumefied parts, that Desault preserved his life.* Le Clerc, professor of legal medicine in the school of medicine at Paris, opened the body of an individual who had died of putrid fever. In dissecting, he wounded his fingers. The virus immediately penetrated over the whole system, and he died on the third

* Percy, New England Journal, vol. 8, p. 193.

day after the accident had taken place. On examination, all the viscera were found in a putrid state.*

Cases have also occurred in England and in this country. Dr. Pett of Clapton, assisted a medical friend in examining the body of a lady, who died of peritoneal inflammation after child-birth. Twelve hours after, he complained of pain in the middle finger of his right hand, where a slight superficial wound was discovered. This was touched with caustic, and afterwards with strong sulphuric acid, but he did not feel either of the applications. A second application of lunar caustic produced intense pain. This was followed by severe rigor, and the pain spread with increasing agony along the arm. He passed a sleepless night, and in the morning, his finger was white and without sensation, and his countenance alarmingly altered. The arm went on to swell, the superficial absorbents appeared inflamed, the pectoral and axillary region became much affected, the finger put on the appearance of gangrene, and there was high nervous excitement generally. The unfavorable symptoms rapidly increased, and notwithstanding every means that was used, he sunk in 105 hours after the injury. On examination, the chest and abdomen were found healthy, the heart rather large and flabby, and the liver considerably deranged by a chronic affection.†

A valued friend and colleague of mine, some years since, nearly lost his life from a similar cause. He punctured his finger with a needle while examining the body of a child. In forty-eight hours afterwards, acute, lancinating pains were felt in the wound, and it assumed a deep purple colour. The arm itself, and the glands of the axilla also became affected, and were exquisitely painful. A general disturbance of the nervous system soon succeeded, and he was only relieved by a strict adherence to the antiphlogistic treatment.

These cases are sufficient to show the danger that sometimes follows from a puncture during dissection. Whether this danger is aggravated by a peculiar condition of the sys-

* New-York Medical Repository, vol. 11, p. 433.

† Quarterly Journal Foreign Medicine and Surgical, vol. 5, p. 313.

tem, is in some degree still undetermined; but it is not improbable that the effects may be exacerbated in cases where there is a previous predisposition to disease, either of a temporary or constitutional nature.

This subject, however, has been treated in a very elaborate manner by the late Dr. Duncan junior, in his paper on Diffuse Inflammation of the cellular tissue; and to it and the authorities quoted below, I must refer the reader.*

As to the treatment, but little need be said. Chaussier recommends that every student should keep constantly in his pocket, a small phial of muriate of antimony, and whenever he wounds himself, immediately cauterize the puncture with it. Percy advises the application of strong nitric acid.

The disease of the system can only be combatted by the same remedies that are generally applicable in cases where the nervous and cellular systems are severely affected.†

5. MECHANICAL IRRITANTS.

There is one substance that requires to be noticed, principally for the purpose of establishing its *innocuous* properties. If it deserves a place in a treatise on toxicology, it must be, as Professor Christison has very properly styled it, as a *mechanical irritant*.

Glass and enamel in powder. This was formerly deemed a highly poisonous substance. It was one of the articles administered to Sir Thomas Overbury for his destruction, and toxi-

* Duncan, Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 1, p. 455 to 650.

Sir Astley Cooper's Lectures.

Shaw's Manual of Anatomy, vol. 1, Introduction.

Godman, Chapman's Journal, vol. 9, p. 359.

Dr. Colles in Dublin Hospital Reports, vols. 3 and 4.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 24, p. 56, 59, 225; vol. 26, p. 86, 105.

Travers on Constitutional Irritation.

Copland's Dictionary, Art. *Cellular tissue*.

Lawrence on Dissection Wounds, Lancet, N. S. vol. 5, p. 561.

Dr. Milledoller on the poison of putrid animal matter, New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 9, p. 39.

† New-England Journal, vol. 8, p. 195.

There is a very curious fact recorded by Professor Silliman, in his Journal, vol. 2, p. 168, on the authority of Dr. Samuel Brown. Dr. B. informed him that he had had patients under his care, who had been bitten in personal combats, and whose wounds exhibited every symptom of poison, pertinaciously resisting all the ordinary modes of cure. The saliva and tartar of the teeth, are mentioned as probably the deleterious substances in these cases. Another case is mentioned in the Annals of Medicine, vol. 6, p. 373.

cologists and medical jurists, even to the present day, continue its arrangement with the corrosive poisons. Various experimenters have, however, given it in considerable quantity to animals, and even to men, without producing any injury. Le Sauvage administered several drachms to cats, dogs, and rats, and in neither during life was any illness perceived, nor on being killed for the purpose of dissection, was any lesion noticed in the stomach or intestines. Caldani and Mandruzatto, are also said to have made similar experiments on animals, and the latter on himself, with the same results.* It would thus seem, that the substance in question can hardly be deemed a poison, at least in the ordinary sense of the term. But there is no doubt that it may produce injury by its insolubility, and its mechanical properties. If the fragments be coarse or large, inflammation may arise from the irritation that is excited.

Mr. Hebb relates a case of this kind. A child eleven months old died under suspicious circumstances, and the coroner requested him to make an examination. He found the inside of the stomach lined with a tough layer of mucus, streaked with blood, while the villous coat was highly vascular, and covered with numberless particles of glass of various sizes, some of which touched, while others lacerated it. None of it was found beyond the pylorus, and the rest of the body was healthy. Mr. Hebb is of opinion that it was given mixed with sugar. Although indicted, the supposed murderers escaped, under the idea that the glass might have been accidentally ground and mixed with the sugar.†

There is a remarkable case on record, where a husband was accused of having poisoned his wife by means of this substance.

Louis Lavalley, a young man residing near Bayeux, in France, became attached to Maria Guerin, the daughter of a neighbour. After the intimacy had continued for some time, it was discovered that she was pregnant, and her relatives

* Orfila, voi. 1, p. 413. Marc, p. 61. Le Sauvage also made numerous experiments on himself with pounded glass, but *no inconvenience or injury was produced*. (See the New-York Medical Repository, vol. 14, p. 406, for a statement of his experiments.)

† Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 1, p. 47.

urged the necessity of marriage. As Louis continued deeply enamoured of the female, but little difficulty was experienced in effecting this, and his parents readily consented to the union. They were married on the 5th of November, 1807, but were to remain separate, at the request of the family of Guerin, until after her delivery.*

On the thirteenth of December, Lavalley invited his wife and father-in-law to a family dinner. The entertainment consisted of roast pig, black pudding, and calf's liver; and the bride partook freely of all of them. To these, coffee succeeded, and she mixed a little brandy with her's. She was urged to remain that evening, but her father opposed it, and she returned to his home with him. She continued well during the night, but early on the next morning was seized with violent pains, and in four or five hours convulsions followed. Medical aid was afforded, but without relief. Delivery with instruments was then attempted, but an alarming hæmorrhage obliged the accoucher to abandon it, and finally, as death seemed inevitable, the infant was extracted by the cæsarean operation. She died during this, and her infant did not survive her. The funeral took place as usual; but about a month after her decease, and after some disagreement had taken place among the families, concerning the disposition of her marriage settlement, a report came into circulation that she had been poisoned, and her husband was named as the murderer. The body was disinterred forty-two days after death, and although putrefaction was greatly advanced, yet the stomach and other viscera were removed and carried away for examination.

The reports made concerning the dissection were as follows: The stomach, duodenum, ileon and rectum, on being opened, exhibited numerous black points and spots. On the internal coat of the intestines a whitish substance was discovered, which was ascertained by the magnifying glass and chemical experiments, to be *pounded glass*. Vesicles resembling the effects of a burn, were also present, and particularly in those places where the black spots were most numerous;

* It is intimated, as a reason for this, that she laboured under a "*maladie dartreuse*," for which she was under treatment, and which they desired to conceal.

and some slight erosions were observed. On these grounds, the surgeons and chemists gave it as their opinion, that the pounded glass had produced the symptoms, and the fatal termination.

Lavalley was dragged to prison, with every mark of opprobrium. His advocate, however, addressed several questions to the president of the school of medicine, for the purpose of elucidating the medical testimony. And these were answered by two of the professors, whose names are well known throughout the medical world, Baudelocque and Chaussier. Their report is dated March, 1808. After stating the questions put to them, I shall detail the substance of their answers.

The first interrogatory was, whether from the facts stated above, there appeared to be any natural causes for the death of the female, either as regards her situation, the food she had taken, the medical assistance she had received, or the omission of proper remedies?

To this, it is replied, that the nature of the food taken by the female being rather indigestible, the addition of brandy to her coffee, and her subsequent walk, all might have aided in producing indigestion; that this is a common occurrence from any impropriety in eating, with females advanced in pregnancy, and that convulsions is in these cases a common consequence of indigestion. As to the treatment, they decline any observations, but intimate an opinion that the attempted delivery with instruments when no dilatation was present, as well as the cæsarean operation, were both improper.

The second question was, whether her death ought to be attributed to the pounded glass found in the stomach and intestines; whether this glass is a poison, and if so, what are its effects and mode of operation, and do these correspond to the appearances observed on dissection?

The professors intimate a doubt, whether the substance found was actually glass, but admitting it was so, they proceeded to examine its nature. They observe that it is a common and ancient opinion, that rock crystal, the diamond, glass, and other analogous substances, are active and dangerous poisons, since, by their hardness, they tear and pierce the

coats of the intestines. This belief, however, is shown to be totally incorrect by numerous quotations from various authors, of persons who had swallowed diamonds, and of eaters of glass, in large pieces, all of whom had escaped injury. They declare, that glass, in a state of fine powder, is an inert substance, and particularly so when the stomach is filled with food. The idea of its being taken in the coffee is at once refuted by the fact, that it would fall to the bottom by its own gravity; and it is suggested, whether if glass were actually present in the intestines, it might not have come from some vessel which she had broken with her teeth during the existence of the convulsions.

The last question was, whether putrefaction would not produce great changes in a body forty-two days after death; and if so, what caused the state of the viscera, as reported by the examiners?

It is replied, that usually the term of forty days produces such a change as to render an examination altogether uncertain, but even allowing the season to have been favourable for the preservation of the body, they do not conceive the facts stated to indicate the results of poison. Convulsions supervening on a full stomach, and passing to a fatal termination, would leave an engorged state of the vessels in various parts, and predispose to ecchymosis, while the progress of putrefaction would readily explain the black spots that were observed. The medicines administered, being antimonial emetics, and an enema of senna, must also, and particularly as they proved inefficacious, have aided in determining the irritation to the stomach and bowels. As to the erosions, they remark, that their appearance proves little, since they are frequently observed in those who die from diseases which exclude all idea of poison.

The professors conclude with observing, that as natural causes will abundantly account for the death of the female, they consider the accused husband as guiltless; and when brought to trial before the criminal court of Caen, he was acquitted by the *unanimous* verdict of the jury.*

Causes Célèbres par Mejan, vol. 2, p. 324, vol. 3, p. 344. Marc, in a recent case where he was consulted, gave an opinion corresponding to the above. The case is

6. POISONOUS GASES.

Chlorine in a gaseous state destroys those who breathe it, by producing great irritation of the bronchiæ, and even when diluted with atmospheric air, it causes cough and inflammation. Pelletier is thus said to have fallen a victim to its effects.

Nysten and Orfila have performed several experiments with gaseous chlorine on animals. When injected into the jugular, it caused pain, difficult breathing, and speedy death; and the blood, on examination, was dark coloured and altogether fluid. The injection of it into the pleura excited great agitation, extreme pain, and trembling of the limbs, but the animal survived the immediate effects. On the third day he was killed, and the pleura was found covered with a false membrane, and bore all the appearances of recent inflammation.*

Mr. Broughton found that animals put in this gas died in less than thirty seconds. The lungs were tinged with the yellow colour of the gas and the peculiar odour of chlorine was perceptible throughout their structure.†

The power of habit, however, is remarkable, in accustoming the system to the effects of this substance. In many of the manufactories in Great Britain, where the workmen constantly breathe an atmosphere of chlorine, but little injury is experienced, except acidity and other stomach complaints, and for this they use chalk. Many aged men are found in these establishments.‡

Fluid chlorine when introduced into the stomach, caused dejection and death; and on dissection, the mucous membrane of the stomach was either extensively inflamed or ulcerated. The other organs were unaffected. It is hence evident, that its action resembles that of the other acids.

Antidotes. The inhalation of ammonia, or of sulphuric ether, or if nothing else be accessible, inhaling warm water from a

mentioned in detail in *Annales d'Hygiène*, vol. 3, p. 365. A negro woman in the Island of Jamaica attempted to poison a whole family with pounded glass, which was put into a dish of curried fish. The fact was discovered towards the end of the meal, and the master of the family gave purgatives to each, in consequence of which they all passed large quantities of coarsely powdered bottle glass. When Dr. Turner, who reports the case, saw them, four days after the attempt, they had not suffered any inconvenience. (*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 22, p. 224.

* Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 92.

† Brande's *Journal*, N. S., vol. 7, p. 15.

‡ Christison, p. 697.

tea pot or other vessel. When inflammation is induced, it requires active treatment.

Nitrous acid vapour. Dr. Desgranges has presented a valuable case, illustrative of the effects of this substance on the animal economy.

A merchant at Lyons, aged forty-five, and of a tolerably strong constitution, had stored a considerable quantity of nitrous acid in his warehouse. He was awaked one morning by the howling of the watch dog, which he had shut up in it; and on opening the door, immediately perceived the smell of nitrous gas. The dog rushed out with his paws burnt, ran to the nearest water to quench his thirst, and after playing an hour or two with some other dogs, returned and expired at his master's door, after vomiting thick matter of various colours.

The merchant attempted to enter the warehouse, but was driven back in a few minutes by the approach of suffocation. He, however, persisted in again visiting the room, and finally succeeded in carrying out the broken cantines. Two were found empty, each of which had contained thirty-two pounds of aquafortis.

This was early in the morning. At six o'clock he breakfasted, and then went to pay a visit, but returned before eight, with a dry and burning heat in the throat, irritation in his stomach and breast, and a very painful sense of tightness near the attachment of the diaphragm. He was advised to drink freely of milk, and fomentations were applied to the abdomen, together with sinapisms to the arms. The two last remedies seemed to fatigue him much, and to augment his distress, but he continued the milk. At one o'clock he felt easier—had a spontaneous yellow stool, and in the space of an hour two others, both of the colour of citrine ointment. His urine was scanty, and in the evening he experienced frequent pressing desire to make water, but always in vain. At four o'clock he began to expectorate a yellowish matter, and had afterwards a little cough and slight vomiting. Injections were given him, which came off instantly, but coloured yellow. At nine, his body became of a blue colour; his breathing was oppressed; there was some rattling in the throat and hiccup, and he com-

plained of great pain in the abdomen and across the bottom of the thorax: convulsive motions and slight delirium also supervened. Towards morning his anguish increased, and his anxiety became inexpressible. He, however, preserved his senses until six, and died at seven o'clock. Shortly after death, his belly swelled and became distended in a remarkable manner; his face was purple, his lips black, and some blood issued from his nose and mouth. The body was not opened.*

There is also a curious case related in the Philosophical Transactions by Dr. Mounsey, where a long train of symptoms afflicted an individual at Moscow, apparently from inhaling the fumes of a mixture of verdigris and false gold leaf with nitric acid. Red spots appeared on various parts of his body; nausea, pain, and anxiety at the pit of the stomach came on; and it was not until after several days, that he was relieved from the pains in various parts of his body.†

Muriatic acid gas, (Hydrochloric acid gas.) Drs. Christison and Turner found this extremely destructive to vegetables; and not long since, a soap manufactory was adjudged a nuisance in England, in consequence of its being proved that the gas issuing from it destroyed vegetation, and affected men and animals passing near it. Animals die in convulsions from breathing it.‡

Sulphurous acid gas. This is constantly disengaged when sulphur is burnt in the open air. It is also produced by the roasting of various metals.

In March, 1817, a number of miners at the Lead-hills in Scotland, who had gone down to work at the depth of twenty-five fathoms, were suddenly seized with difficulty of breathing, violent pain in the head, weakness of the lower extremities, palpitation, and in some cases vomiting. Giddiness ensued, and in a short time complete mania. Some were furious, and others listless, or appeared as if they were intoxicated. Vo-

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 16.

† Philosophical Transactions, vol. 50, p. 19; and vol. 54, p. 15. Another fatal case is given by Dr. Cherrier, (Bulletin de la Société D'Emulation,) London Medical Repository, vol. 21, p. 440. Death followed in two days, and inflammation of the lungs was discovered.

‡ London Medical Gazette, vol. 10, p. 311, 350.

miting or retching generally came on, when they had been exposed for some time to the air above ground; and in other cases, tenesmus was present. By the use of emetics or purgatives, as the symptoms indicated, they were relieved, and recovered in the course of a few days. Two, however, who could not be brought up, were deprived of life.

The accident, in this instance, was attributed to a quantity of smoke escaping from the chimney of the engine under ground, into the way-gates, and so contaminating the air in the workings, from the sulphurous acid gas which it contained, as to render it deleterious. It evidently was but slightly charged with carbonic acid gas, since the candles burnt, though faintly, at the place where the men perished.*

In the following instance, I also apprehend that sulphurous acid gas was the main cause of death.

In November, 1821, a smith at Maidstone was repairing the inside of the boiler of a steam engine; and in joining two pieces of iron, he made use of a cement composed of sal ammoniac, sulphur and iron turnings, which produced such a quantity of fumes that he was suffocated in a few moments. His assistant being at work on the outside, and hearing a struggling noise within, got through the opening at the top of the boiler, and while descending to his master's assistance, inhaled the fumes and fell to the bottom. A workman attempted twice to descend to his assistance, but he was so powerfully affected by the effluvia that he was obliged to desist. A large quantity of water having been thrown into the boiler, the bodies were brought out. The master was quite dead, and his assistant, though he exhibited some signs of life when taken out, died next morning.†

Seleniuretted hydrogen. From the experiments of Berzelius, this gas would seem to be highly deleterious. On smelling a small bubble not larger than a pea, its effect on the olfactory

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 13, p. 353; case by Mr. Braid, surgeon. Water, on being thrown down the shaft, improved the air so much, probably by absorbing the sulphurous acid gas, that one person, who had lain insensible for an hour at the side of the shaft, was restored. See also Mr. Watson's cases, *ibid.* vol. 32, p. 345; and Mr. Bald on the fires that take place in collieries, Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, vol. 5, p. 103.

† Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 6, p. 402, from the Technical Repository.

organ was so powerful, that he lost the power of distinguishing caustic ammonia, although he held a bottle of it to his nose. On another occasion, inflammation of the eyes and nose, cough and expectoration, and indeed all the symptoms of violent catarrh occurred, nor were they relieved until a blister was applied to the chest.*

* Berzelius, *Traité de Chimie*, vol. 2, p. 414. It has been suggested that the very deleterious qualities ascribed to sulphuretted hydrogen by the French chemists, may have been owing to an admixture of selenium with the sulphur. (*Annals of Philosophy*, N. S. vol. 8, p. 230.)

CHAPTER XX.

NARCOTIC POISONS.

OPIUM: its constituents, *morphine*—*narcotine*—*codeine*. Symptoms and effects of opium and laudanum; ordinary duration of a fatal case; quantity that can produce death. Effects of habit; opium eating; whether this is compatible with longevity. Effects of opium in the form of injection, or when applied externally; effects on animals. Symptoms and effects of *morphine*—cases, of *narcotine*; of *meconic acid*; of *codeine*. Appearances on dissection from taking opium and laudanum. Chemical proofs. Tests of *meconic acid*; of *morphine* and its salts; of opium in solution; of opium in mixed fluids and solids. Inability always to find indications of opium. Case of Castaing. Treatment. *Hyoscyamus niger* and *albus*. *Solanum dulcamara*. *Lactuca virosa*. *Taxus baccata*. *Paris quadrifolia*. *Actæa spicata*. **PRUSSIC ACID.** Symptoms; quantity that can produce death; time in which its effects are completed. Appearances on dissection. Effects on animals. Tests—in the pure state; when mixed with animal matters. Antidotes. Hydrocyanate of ammonia. *Prunus lauro-cerasus*—laurel water—effects—case of Sir Theodosius Boughton. *Prunus padus*. *Prunus virginiana*. *Prunus nigra*. *Prunus caroliniana*. *Amygdalus communis*—oil of bitter almonds. *Amygdalus persica*. *Sorbus aucuparia*. **CARBAZOTIC ACID.** **NARCOTIC GASES.** Nitrogen—carbonic oxide—carburated hydrogen—nitrous oxide—cyanogen—oxygen—hydrogen.

NARCOTIC poisons are defined by Orfila, to be those which produce stupor, drowsiness, paralysis or apoplexy and convulsions. "The term *narcotism* (says Dr. Christison) has been used by different writers with different significations, but is now generally understood to denote the effects of such poisons as bring on a state of the system like that caused by apoplexy, epilepsy, or other disorders commonly called nervous. Narcotic poisons, therefore, are such as produce chiefly or solely symptoms of a disorder of the nervous system."

In a previous chapter, I mentioned the effects generally, and the appearances on dissection, that most commonly attend this class. The peculiarities of each will now be noticed.

Under this division, the following substances are commonly arranged:

VEGETABLE NARCOTICS.	<i>Smilacæa</i> ,	PRUSSIC ACID.
<i>Papaveracæa</i> ,	Paris.	CARBAZOTIC ACID.
Papaver,	<i>Ranunculacæa</i> ,	NARCOTIC GASES.
Morphine,	Actæa.	Nitrogen?
Narcotine.	<i>Rutacæa</i> ,	Carbonic oxide,
<i>Solanæa</i> ,	Peganum.	Carburetted hydrogen,
Hyoscyamus,	<i>Ericæa</i> ,	Nitrous oxide,
Solanum,	Azalea.	Cyanogen gas,
Physalis.	<i>Amygdalæa</i> ,	Oxygen gas,
<i>Compositæ</i> ,	Prunus and Cerasus,	Hydrogen,
Lactuca.	Amygdalus & Persica.	Sulphuretted hydrogen*
<i>Coniferæa</i> ,	<i>Pomacæa</i> ,	Carbonic acid gas.*
Taxus.	Sorbus.	

OPIUM.

This substance is the inspissated juice of the *Papaver somniferum*, or common white poppy, obtained by incision into its capsules when they have arrived at a certain state of maturity. Its appearance and character are so well known, that it is not necessary to enlarge upon them; but it must be mentioned, that within the present century, it has been ascertained to be a very compound substance. For our knowledge of this, we are indebted to Derosné, Sertuerner, Robiquet, Magendie, and several other French chemists.

By various manipulations, there have been obtained from opium—*morphine*; its alkaloid, *narcotine*; a peculiar acid, termed the *meconic*; and a *resinoid substance*. To these, of late years, are added the *codeine* and *paverine* of Robiquet, the *narceine* of Pelletier, the *meconine* of Dublanc and Couerbe, and various other ingredients.†

From the circumstance that opium contains so many distinct principles, and that two or more of these may unite in producing its ordinary effects, while some of them separately have been used as instruments of poison, it becomes somewhat of a task to present this subject distinctly to the reader. I can,

* Already noticed.

† Johnson's Report on Chemistry, Proceedings of British Association, 1832, p. 513. Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 11, p. 395. London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 2, p. 153, 156. An analysis of Pelletier's paper (from Journal de Pharmacie of November 1832) is given in Lancet, N. S. vol. 11, p. 334.

Pelletier is also stated to have discovered a crystalline substance, which he calls *paramorphia*. It has a very marked action on the animal economy; and in very small doses, it kills a dog in a few minutes. Magendie found it to act on the brain, and to cause convulsions. (London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 4, p. 77.)

however, devise no better mode than to treat of the symptoms and effects on animals, the appearances on dissection, and the chemical proofs, successively—and notice under each head, first, opium and laudanum, and next, the various principles contained in them.

Symptoms and effects of opium. When opium or laudanum is taken in large quantities, the following symptoms are usually observed within a short time, giddiness, insensibility and immobility; respiration scarcely perceptible, and a small and feeble pulse, which sometimes becomes full and slow. The eyes are shut, the pupils contracted, and the whole expression of the countenance is usually that of deep and perfect repose. As the effects increase, the lethargic state becomes more profound, deglutition is suspended, the breathing is occasionally stertorous, the pupils are insensible to the application of light, the countenance is pale and cadaverous, and the muscles of the limbs and trunk are in a state of relaxation. Vomiting sometimes supervenes, and there is an occasional glimpse of returning animation, but the comatose state soon returns, and death, which is sometimes preceded by convulsions, rapidly follows.

The period which elapses between taking the poison and the commencement of the symptoms, is various. The tincture of opium (laudanum) in large quantities and on an empty stomach, may probably begin to act in a few minutes. From a comparison of cases by Dr. Christison, it would appear that several individuals were found soporose, in a quarter of an hour after taking it. When swallowed in the solid form, the action of opium is usually delayed for an hour. It may operate before that time, but the interval is seldom extended.

When noticing the diseases that might be confounded with narcotic poisoning, I mentioned the distinction between the coma produced by apoplexy and by opium. In the latter case, unless the fatal termination is near, the individual may be roused by brisk agitation, tickling the nostrils, or loud speaking. This state of restored consciousness is, however, always imperfect, and is speedily followed again by lethargy when the exciting cause is withheld.*

* Christison, p. 619.

Although convulsions and spasms are not common, yet when they do occur, they are usually extremely severe. It is probable that in some instances, the use of remedies may aid in causing their occurrence.

There are also occasional varieties noticed, as to the state and frequency of the pulse, the appearance of the pupils, and the expression of the countenance.*

The bladder is sometimes unable to contract on its contents, and attempts to empty it prove useless.† While again in cases of recovery, such a weakness will be left in the lower extremities, and approaching so near to paralysis, that it cannot retain its contents.‡

Two instances are mentioned in which vomiting was the *sole effect* induced from taking large quantities of opium. In one case, an ounce of laudanum was swallowed at midnight, the individual went to sleep, and shortly after rising, began to vomit, and continued doing so during the day. The next day he was well. In the other, three ounces produced, after a few hours, a similar result.§

Constipation of the bowels is the usual result of opium taken in large quantities; yet, in one or two cases, it has produced colic or diarrhoea.

According to Dr. Christison, the ordinary duration of a fatal case of poisoning with opium, is from seven to twelve hours. There is of course variation in this; but the majority of instances come within the period now stated.|| The dose

* Orfila has shown that *contraction* of the pupils is most common in the early stages. The difference of opinion between him and Chaussier on this point, will be noticed in the details of the trial of Castaing.

† See case by Mr. Cornish, London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 31, p. 193, and also a case, *ibid.* vol. 28, p. 89.

‡ An instance of this kind by Mr. Murley, is quoted in the Eclectic Repertory, from the London Medical Review for October, 1811.

§ London Medical Repository, vol. 9, p. 525; vol. 10, p. 175. Dr. Christison mentions some additional cases.

|| The extremes mentioned by him, are, a case from the London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 31, which proved fatal in three hours, and another which occurred to Alibert, in twenty-four hours. Christison, p. 623.

In a case tried before the Court of King's Bench, in 1832, (*Kinnear v. Borrodaile*), where an insurance company contested the payment on the ground of the probability of narcotic poisoning, the servant positively swore that he heard the room-bell ring at 9 A. M., and was further certain that no one but the individual in question could have rung it. He was found dead at 11 A. M. The countenance was pale, the trunk

requisite to cause death, must necessarily be more a matter of uncertainty. From 30 to 60 grains have, in many instances, produced it; and Dr. Christison mentions a case which was furnished to him by Dr. W. Brown, of Edinburgh, in which even so small quantity as "four grains and a half, taken by an adult along with nine grains of camphor, was followed by the usual signs of narcotism and death, in nine hours. The man took the opium for a cough, at seven in the morning; at nine, his wife found him in a deep sleep, from which she could not rouse him; nothing was done for his relief till three P. M. when Dr. Brown was called to him, and found him labouring under all the usual symptoms of poisoning with opium, contracted pupils among the rest, and death ensued in an hour, notwithstanding the active employment of remedies. On examining the body, no morbid appearance of any note was found, except fluidity of the blood."*

The effects of habit, however, render the system for a time insensible to large and repeated doses; and in this way only can we explain why enormous quantities are daily taken by individuals, without any of the symptoms of poisoning, as now stated.

That injurious consequences finally occur, would appear to be established by the concurrent testimony of travellers in the East. The Turks, as is well known, are of all nations the most generally attached to its use; and the following description of the *Teriakis*, or opium eaters, of Constantinople, fully explains the result. "Pale, emaciated, and rickety, sunk into a profound stupor, or agitated by the grimaces of delirium, their persons are, after the first view, easily to be recognized, and made an impression too deep to be speedily erased. The increasing attachments for wine has diminished the consumption of opium, but there are still *Teriakis* who will swallow in a glass of water, three or four lozenges, amounting to one hundred grains."†

warm, but the extremities were cold. The vessels of the brain were rather full, and blood to the amount of three pints was found in the stomach. There was no smell of laudanum, nor any marks of vomiting. This individual went to bed late on the preceding evening in his usual health. The jury found for the plaintiff, and thus negatived the idea of poisoning. (*Lancet*, N. S. vol. 10, p. 468.)

* Christison, p. 624.

† Hobhouse's *Albania*, vol. 2, p. 944.

Mr. Madden, a recent medical traveller, fully confirms this account; and he adds, that a regular opium eater seldom lives beyond thirty years, if he commence the practice early.* This will be found, I apprehend, most conformable to the result of ordinary experience.

If the reader will refer to the Chapter on *Insurance upon Lives*, (vol. 1, p. 527,) he will see a case there stated, which is connected with the subject. The individual in question had been in the practice of taking laudanum, in large quantities, for thirty years, and it was contended by the insurance office that this was a *habit tending to shorten life*, and ought to have been stated by him. The consequent discussion led Dr. Christison to make some inquiries, and he found that in most of the cases of opium eating, which he could obtain, the expected result of shortening life had not occurred. It must, however, be recollected, that in many instances, the quantity consumed is very gradually increased—that its immediate bad effects must be early counteracted by remedies, or what is probably most common, that the bowels become accustomed to its action, and preserve, in a measure, their healthy condition, and thus that many individuals, if their original stamina be good, may linger on without any striking results, to the verge of old age. The effects, at all events, may be chronic, but I have equally no doubt, that life is shortened, and particularly in young females, who give themselves up to this habit. Besides the peculiar effects of the substance, its reiterated operation has an influence in inducing local excitement, and a predisposition to organic affections. The cases on which these remarks are founded, are unfortunately quite too numerous; and at a more convenient period, I hope to be enabled to present some proofs of the alarming extent to which this pernicious habit is carried.†

* Madden's Travels in Turkey, vol. 1. p. 27, American edition. Dr. Dekay in his recent work on Turkey, states that the opium eaters are no longer to be seen in Constantinople.

† For Dr. Christison's remarks on this subject, see his Toxicology, 2d edit. p. 626, and Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 37, p. 123. Dr. Domeier mentions the case of an individual who has taken opium for 24 years, and is now 51 years old. He is, however, sallow, listless and weak. (London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 4, p. 432. See also Lancet, N. S. vol. 9, p. 710: vol. 16, p. 685.)

Besides its administration by the mouth, opium has occasionally proved dangerous when used in the form of injection, or when applied to the abraded skin. Dr. Christison mentions the case of a friend, who, in order to allay the irritation caused by a blister, applied an opium poultice to the scrotum. He fell into a state of profound sopor, which was luckily interrupted by a visitor. Sir Astley Cooper says he has known a solution of opium applied to an extensive scald on a child, to destroy it.*

As to *Animals*, crude opium, or its watery extract, when introduced into the stomach of dogs, caused, within a few hours, a weakness and paralysis of the posterior extremities, and convulsions of the muscles of the trunk and face. The pupils of the eye were not, however, more dilated than natural, and there was no moaning, but an extreme dejection. The paralysis and convulsions increased until death supervened. Similar effects were produced when the œsophagus was tied, except that death ensued earlier, from large doses.

When the watery extract was inserted into the cellular tissue of the thigh of a dog, paralysis of the posterior extremities, convulsions and accelerated circulation, with trembling of the head and twitches of the lower jaw, occurred, and death followed in a much shorter time than in the previous series of experiments. The injection of the extract into the anus, produced the earlier symptoms of the poison, but the animals recovered.

Dissections generally presented the digestive canal in a sound state. The lungs, however, were usually livid and distended with blood, and the blood in the ventricles was often black and coagulated.†

"According to the most recent inquiries, those of M. Charret, which were extended to every class of the lower animals, opium produces three leading effects. It acts on the brain, causing congestion and consequently sopor; on the general nervous centre as an irritant, exciting convulsions, and

* Lectures, vol. 1, p. 79. A case is mentioned as occurring at La Charité in Paris, where twelve drops of laudanum, used as an injection to allay the pain consequent on cauterization for a strictured rectum, produced all the symptoms of narcotic poisoning and death in 17 hours. (*Lancet*, N. S., vol. 11, p. 639.)

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 110.

on the muscles as a direct sedative. It is poisonous to all animals, man, carnivorous quadrupeds, the rodentia, birds, reptiles, amphibious animals, fishes, insects, and the *mollusca*. But of its three leading effects, some are not produced in certain classes or orders of animals. In the mammalia, with the exception of man, there is no cerebral congestion induced, and death takes place amidst convulsions. In birds, there is some cerebral congestion towards the close, but still the two other phenomena are the most prominent.”*

Symptoms and effects of Morphine, Narcotine, &c. Morphine. The action of morphine is nearly the same as that of opium, but it is more energetic. On its first discovery, Ser-tuerner supposed that in the solid state it had little effect, being nearly insoluble. This, however, is denied at present, and its insolubility is ascribed to its impurity, having contained more or less of narcotine.

According to Orfila, the following are the effects of pure morphine and its salts on animals. When the alkaloid is introduced into the stomach, it is dissolved, apparently by the acid juices contained in that viscus. In large doses, it produces vertigo, dimness of sight, and in a great majority of cases contracted pupils. A dose of two or three grains causes severe vomiting, pain in the stomach, diminished or suppressed urine, and, according to Dr. Bally, a severe itching of the skin.

If from 40 to 100 grains of the acetate of morphine be given to dogs and cats, the hind quarters are observed in a few moments to be weakened, and the gait becomes unsteady. The animals fall into a state of rest or sleep, but are easily roused by the least noise. The pulse is slow and intermittent; the pupil is either contracted, dilated or natural; vomiting and purging occur, and there is more or less of salivation. At the end of an hour, convulsions ensue, and the mouth is full of froth. When the dose proves fatal, a few paroxysms usually precede death. No changes are detected in the alimentary canal, or in other organs, on dissection.

If thirty or forty grains of acetate of morphine are inject-

* Christison, p. 615, quoted from the *Revue Medicale*.

ed into the cellular tissue, the animal dies in five or six hours, with symptoms similar to those already enumerated.*

There are a few cases in which its effects on man have been noticed. In 1829, a young Brazilian student of medicine at Paris, took twenty-four grains of the acetate to destroy himself. In ten minutes he felt heat in the stomach, with excessive itchininess; in three hours and a half, dimness of vision occurred, and in an hour more he felt approaching stupor, and from this he sunk into a state of profound insensibility. He was visited by Orfila, who found him cold, comatose, and affected with lock jaw; the pupils were slightly dilated, the pulse 120; the breathing hurried and stertorous; the abdomen tense and tympanitic, and there were occasional convulsions. He was bled to forty ounces, sinapisms were applied, and stimulant enemata given. By means of these and cold applications, the symptoms were mitigated; the trismus diminished, so that strong coffee could be given. On the next day he had difficult and scanty micturition, with pain in the kidneys and bladder, and difficulty in swallowing. These went off during the second night.†

In another case related by Castara, where fifty grains of acetate of morphine were taken, symptoms of coma supervened in twenty minutes. The limbs were flaccid, the pupils contracted, the face and lips livid, the skin warm and moist, the pulse full and hard, and deglutition impossible. Tartar emetic could not be given. He was then bled, upon which he started, as from sleep, but could not see any one. He complained chiefly of intense itching and a general sense of bruising. In an hour, by being constantly roused, his consciousness was almost restored, and vomiting and purging followed from the exhibition of tartar emetic. After this, he gradually recovered, the sleeping continuing all next day, and the itching of the skin even longer.‡

Julia Fontanelle mentions the case of a child five years old, who was poisoned by the sulphate of morphine, given in

* Orfila's *Toxicologic*, 3d edition, vol. 2, p. 62. Deguise, Depuy and Leuret have also published a series of experiments with acetate of morphine. Paris, 1824.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 33, p. 220.

‡ Christison, p. 633; *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 36, p. 461.

in an enema. The dose was ten grains, sleep followed in ten minutes, and shortly after it was seized with violent convulsions. The error was now discovered, but remedies proved in vain, and death happened in eleven hours.*

The famous case of Dr. Castaing, which occurred in France, belongs also to this division of our subject. He was supposed to have poisoned two brothers with the acetate. I shall give the particulars at the conclusion of the present article.

Narcotine, according to Orfila, in dogs whose gullet is not tied, incites vomiting, and the poison is discharged. But on the other hand, if it be tied, death ensues in two, three or four days, without any remarkable symptoms, but languor and hard breathing. Magendie, however, found that it produced in dogs a state like reverie, accompanied with convulsions. They lie apparently asleep, but are really alive to external objects.

When narcotine was injected into the veins, its action was more rapid and powerful. In doses of three grains, it produced convulsive movements, stupor and death.

Dr. Wibmer, of Munich, found by experiment on himself, that two grains dissolved in olive oil produced merely slight transient headache; that eight grains dissolved by means of muriatic acid had no effect at all, while the same quantity of solid narcotine occasioned headache and restlessness of mind, and trembling of the hands. Dr. Tully, from experiments on himself and others, deems it a powerful narcotic, producing contraction of the pupils, vertigo, nausea on motion, staggering in the gait. In two individuals, vomiting was induced. The doses varied from two to four grains.†

Meconine is said to be acrid.

Meconic acid is probably inert. Drs. Fenoglio and Bleggini of Turin, gave eight grains of the acid, or of the meconiates of soda or potash, to dogs, crows and frogs, without any deleterious effects; and the same quantity was repeatedly

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 219. Trousseau and Bonnet found that morphine and its salts acted with much greater rapidity when applied to the denuded skin than when taken internally. (*Annales d'Hygiène*, vol. 9, p. 229.)

† Silliman's Journal, vol. 21, p. 44, Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 37.

administered to a horse, without any injury. The meconiates, in doses of four grains, were then given to persons labouring under tape worm, without any effect on them or the worms.*

Codeine, from the experiments of Kunkel on animals, produces tetanic convulsions and death. On dissection, he found the cerebellum and spinal marrow gorged with blood. When introduced into the cellular tissue, its action was violent, and exerted principally on the urinary organs—suspending the excretion of urine.† Barbier, however, having used it therapeutically, thinks that it exercises no influence on the spinal marrow or its nerves.‡

Paverine. This is a new principle announced by Robiquet, which is, according to him, soluble in water, and saturates the acids. It is poisonous, and acts in a very marked manner on the spinal marrow.§

Appearances on dissection, from opium or laudanum. I have already mentioned in the preliminary chapter on Poisons, (vol. 2, p. 266,) that these are seldom very marked. The most striking will be seen in the narratives of a few examinations.

In a case where two drachms of opium produced fatal effects in six and a half hours, the body was covered with red-brown patches on the arms, shoulders, and back of the neck. The day after death, the face was pale, and the mouth filled with froth. There was a general congestion of black blood in the brain; the dura mater was injected, and even the capillaries gave out, on incision, minute drops of black blood. The heart was filled with the same, as were the lungs, and the bronchiæ were reddish. The stomach was swollen, and had red-brown patches at its fundus. The intestinal mucous membrane was minutely injected—being the effect of congestion, and not of inflammation. The liver and spleen were gorged with blood, and the bladder and kidneys sound.||

* Brande's Journal, vol. 17, p. 393.

† Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6. p. 88, from *Revue Médicale*.

‡ Lancet, N. S. vol. 14, p. 118.

§ London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 2, p. 153. Magendie corroborates its powerful deleterious qualities. (Lond. Med. Quart. Rev. vol. 4, p. 306.)

|| London Medical Repository, vol. 14, p. 426.

In Mr. Stanley's case, related in the Transactions of the London College of Physicians, water was found in the cellular tissue of the pia mater, covering the greater part of the cerebrum; but in other respects, the brain had no unusual appearance. The stomach was contracted, and filled with a fluid, not resembling laudanum either in colour or smell. There was no inflammation present.*

In Mr. Cornish's case, coagulable lymph was effused between the dura mater, the arachnoid coat and the pia mater; and there was rather more fluid than is usual in the lateral ventricles. The stomach was natural, and the bladder contained about a pint of urine.†

In commenting on the appearances observed, Dr. Christison remarks, that turgescence of the vessels in the brain, and watery effusion in the ventricles and on the surface of the brain, are generally met with. In a case examined by him, each ventricle contained three drachms of fluid, and the arachnoid membrane on the surface of the brain was much infiltrated. "But congestion and effusion are by no means universal."‡

Extravasation of blood is a rare occurrence. Our author quotes one from Mr. Jewel of London. In a young female, who died eight hours after taking two ounces of laudanum, several clots were found in the substance of the brain, and one which lay in the anterior right lobe was an inch long.§ Dr. Granville mentioned another at a meeting of the Westminster Medical Society, in November, 1825, where extravasated blood was found in various parts of the brain.||

The lungs are generally, but not universally, found gorged with blood.¶ The stomach is in most cases natural; in a few,

* Transactions, vol. 6, p. 414.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 31, p. 193. The same state of the bladder was seen in another case. (Ibid. vol. 28, p. 80.)

‡ Dr. Bright, in a case examined by him, found great turgescence of the vessels, and the substance of the brain was filled with bleeding points, but there was no water in the ventricles. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 19, p. 327.)

§ Christison, p. 637, from the London Med. and Phys. Journal, vol. 55, p. 111.

|| Lancet, vol. 9, p. 339. Another instance is mentioned by Dr. Clarke, Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 5, p. 88.

¶ In a letter from Dr. Clarke to Dr. Rush, dated at Verdun in France, in 1807, it is stated, that in a young man found dead in bed from taking laudanum, the trachea and air vessels of the lungs were completely filled with frothy blood, and some blood issued from the mouth: every other part was natural. (Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 5, p. 88.)

the villous coat is red, but it is probably never inflamed. There is only one case in which this is positively stated to have been present.*

Lividity of the skin is quite common, and so also is fluidity of the blood. But this last is not invariable. Four cases are cited by Dr. Christison, in which the blood was found coagulated in the cavities of the heart.†

The bodies of persons poisoned by opium also, generally pass rapidly into putrefaction.‡

The poison cannot always be found in the stomach. "This may arise from two causes. It may be all absorbed, as will often happen when it has been taken in the liquid form, or it may be partly absorbed and partly decomposed by the process of digestion. But in one or other of these ways, it may certainly disappear, and that in a very few hours only."§ Cases in which it was detected after death will be hereafter mentioned.

I have already mentioned at page 280 of this volume, that Orfila and Lesueur have ascertained that opium and the salts of morphine do not undergo decomposition by being long in

* It is quoted from Lassus by Orfila, (*Toxicology*, vol. 2.) A woman, aged sixty, took thirty-six grains of opium, and in five or six hours after, was found asleep, with apoplectic symptoms. She recovered, however, so long as to tell what she had done. Ipecacuanha was given, and afterwards vinegar, but without effect. She soon became insensible, and died in eleven hours after taking it. On dissection, the stomach was found inflamed, and in some parts eroded: the brain was natural. As Lassus saw this female but once, it is supposed that probably some corrosive substance had also been taken. (Merat, *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales*, vol. 37, p. 505.)

† Another is given by Dr. Charles A. Lee; *New-York Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 8, p. 297.

‡ I find a very interesting case of poisoning by opium in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 11, p. 285. The details are as follows: A healthy man aged 28, purchased an ounce of opium and probably took all. On his way home he was observed to be merry. He went to bed and his wife noticed his breathing to be frequent, but in reply to questions he said he was well. His face was ghastly and his eyes had lost their expression, yet his conversation was rational and his mind clear. A person present thinking the case a serious one, opened a vein, but after an ounce had been drawn, the bleeding stopped, and the man died, certainly not more than two and a half hours after taking the opium. On dissection, the right ventricle and vena cava were found filled with blood. In the stomach, there was from half an ounce to an ounce of opium; some half dissolved, but the most in masses. There was a slight redness of the mucous coat. The lungs were empty and the surface of the body pale.

§ Christison, p. 639. Cases in which it could not be found are mentioned in *London Medical Repository*, vol. 14, p. 426.

Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 196, by Dr. Christison. *London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 31, p. 193, by Mr. Cornish.

contact with decaying animal matter. "Even after many months they may be discovered, at least the putrefaction of the matter with which they are mingled does not add any impediment in the way of their discovery. It is only necessary to observe that the alkaloid may be rendered insoluble by the evolution of ammonia, which separates it from its state of combination.*

Chemical proofs. In noticing these, I shall reverse the order so far as first to mention those of the principles contained in opium.

Tests for meconic acid. This acid may be procured thus. Precipitate a strong watery infusion of opium with acetate of lead. Add ten or twelve parts of water to the impure meconate of lead that has thus been thrown down, and transmit through it a stream of sulphuretted hydrogen. Evaporate and crystalline the acid obtained. The crystals may be subjected a second time to precipitation with acetate of lead, and decomposition by sulphuretted hydrogen. Another method, also proposed by Dr. Christison, is to mix the first precipitation of meconate of lead with vitrified boracic acid, and heat the mixture gently in a tube or retort. At a temperature somewhat short of that of charring, white crystals of meconic acid are sublimed. The following are some of its properties:

1. When heated in a tube, it is partly decomposed and partly sublimed, and the sublimate condenses in filamentous, radiated crystals.

2. When dissolved even in a very large quantity of water, the solution acquires an intense cherry red colour, with the permuriate of iron.

3. This solution gives a pale green precipitate, with the sulphuret of copper, and if the precipitate is not too abundant, it is dissolved by boiling, but reappears on cooling.

4. The following has been proposed by Mr. J. T. Cooper of London. "To the solution supposed to contain opium or meconic acid, add a few drops of solution of muriate of gold. If meconic acid alone exists, a black, inky precipitate will be found; but if there be narcotine present, or morphine in com-

* Christison, p. 640.

bination with the meconic acid, as there is in opium, a fawn coloured precipitate will fall, which by the subsequent addition of a few drops of caustic potash, will gradually deepen in colour until it becomes very nearly black. By this means twenty drops of laudanum diffused through a pint of water have been discovered.*

Tests for morphine and its salts. Morphine when pure, is in small, beautiful white crystals. It has a bitter taste, but no smell. A gentle heat melts it, and a stronger one reddens and then chars the fused mass, from which issue white fumes, and at last the mass kindles and burns brightly. Morphine is very little soluble in water, more so in ether; but its proper solvents are alcohol and the diluted acids. All its solutions are intensely bitter.

Nitric acid dissolves morphine with effervescence, and the solution becomes instantly orange red; and if too much acid has been used, it changes quickly to yellow. This property it possesses in common with brucine, and also strychnine when not quite pure.† When suspended in water in the form of a white powder, and then treated with a drop or two of permuriate of iron, it is dissolved and forms a deep greenish blue solution, the tint of which is more purely blue, the stronger the solution, and the purer the morphine.‡

Acetate of morphine, is usually of a brown colour. The stronger acids disengage acetic acid. The alkalies, and particularly ammonia, throw down morphia from its solution in water, with a white precipitate. Nitric acid and permuriate of iron act on it as on morphine.§

Hydrochlorate (muriate) of morphine. This decrepitates slightly when heated, and then melts, and at the same time chars and exhales a strong odour. Nitric acid and permuriate of iron act on it as on morphia.

* Lancet, N. S. vol. 9, p. 712.

† To distinguish these, Dr. Vassal proposes to use hydrochlorate of tin. If the liquid contains morphine, it will become yellow; if brucine, a violet colour, and if strychnine, it become colourless. (London Medical Repository, vol. 26, p. 455.)

‡ Pelletier has ascertained that this blue colour is owing to the morphine attracting a portion of the peroxide of iron, and then uniting with another portion of the protoxide, forming thus a morphite of the metal. (Lancet, N. S. vol. 11, p. 337.)

§ Raspail mentions that the concrete part of the oil of cloves exactly imitates morphine when treated by each of the above tests.

M. Serullas, in 1830, proposed iodic acid as a test for morphine and all its salts. He found that when it was brought in contact with the alkaloid, even in very minute quantities, iodine was disengaged, and a blue colour was communicated to starch. He further states, that this effect is peculiar to morphine, and that the other vegetable alkalies, as strychnine, veratrine, brucine, &c. have no action on iodic acid.*

Tests for narcotine. Its crystals when pure, fuse with heat, and concrete on cooling into a resinous like mass. They are soluble in ether and fixed oil, less so in alcohol, insoluble in water or the alkalies, and very soluble in the diluted acids. The tests of morphine and its salts, which I have mentioned above, do not produce any similar effects on narcotine.

Test for opium in solution. Dr. Hare of Philadelphia, has published the following. It is founded on the property of meconic acid to precipitate with lead.

Add a few drops of acetate of lead to a weak solution of opium, (even that contained in ten drops of laudanum, diffused in half a gallon of water.) The meconate of lead will precipitate, but it may require from six to twelve hours. When it is collected at the bottom of the vessel in a small mass, about thirty drops of sulphuric acid should be poured down on it through a glass tube. Let this be followed by as much of the permuriate of iron. The sulphuric acid liberates the meconic, and thus enables the latter to produce the appropriate colour (cherry red) of meconate of iron.†

Orfila while commending this test, suggests that as it is only necessary to have meconic acid in a free state for the iron to strike its red colour, we may act directly on the meconate of morphine contained in opium, by sulphuric acid. The meconic acid will thus be liberated and ready for the action of the test.‡

* Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 9, p. 149. Lancet, N. S. vol. 3, p. 4. Mr. Meeson of London, has just suggested, January, 1835, the following as a test of morphine and its salts. To the suspected fluid, add a strong solution of chlorine. If ammonia be added to this, the solution will take a dark brown colour, which will disappear by adding more chlorine. No other vegetable alkali, he adds, takes this character. With quinine, the same experiment gives a beautiful green colour. (London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 6, p. 158.)

† Chapman's Journal, N. S. vol. 5, p. 77. Dr. Christison suggests as an improvement to throw off the superincumbent fluid, before the acid and iron are added.

* North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 201.

Process for detecting opium in mixed fluids and solids. The following is recommended by Dr. Christison as the most delicate and satisfactory.

"1. If there be any solid matter, it is to be cut into small fragments; water is to be added if necessary, then a little acetic acid to render the mixture acidulous, and when the whole mass has been well stirred and has stood a few minutes, it is to be filtered and evaporated, at a temperature somewhat below ebullition, to the consistence of a moderately thick syrup. To this extract, strong alcohol is to be gradually added, care being taken to break down any coagulum that may be formed, and after ebullition and cooling, the alcoholic solution is to be filtered. The solution must then be evaporated to the consistence of a thin syrup, and the residue dissolved in distilled water and filtered anew.

"2. Add now the solution of acetate of lead, as long as it causes precipitation, filter and wash. The filtered fluid contains the morphia, and the precipitate on the filter contains meconic acid united with the oxide of lead.

"3. The fluid part is to be treated with sulphuretted hydrogen to throw down any lead which may remain in solution. It is then to be filtered while cold, and evaporated sufficiently in a vapour bath. The solution in this state will sometimes be sufficiently pure for the application of the tests of morphia; but in many cases it is necessary, and in all adviseable, to purify it still farther. For this purpose, the fluid is to be precipitated with ammonia, and the precipitate having been collected, washed, and drained on a filter, the precipitate and portion of the filter to which it adheres, are to be boiled in a little pure alcohol. The alcoholic solution, filtered if necessary, will give, by evaporation, a crystalline residue, which becomes orange red with nitric acid, and when suspended in water, becomes blue with permuriate of iron. The latter property I have sometimes been unable to develope, when the former was presented characteristically.

"4. It is useful, however, to separate the meconic acid also, because as its properties are more delicate, I have repeatedly been able to detect it satisfactorily, when I did not feel satis-

fied with the result of the search for morphia. Dr. Ure made the same remark in his evidence on the trial of Stewart and his wife. He detected the meconic acid, but could not separate the morphine. Suspend, therefore, in a little water the precipitate caused by the acetate of lead, (paragraph 2,) transmit sulphuretted hydrogen till the whole precipitate is blackened; filter immediately without boiling, then boil, and, if necessary, filter a second time. A great deal of the impurities thrown down by the acetate of lead, will be separated with the sulphuret of lead, and the meconic acid is dissolved. But it requires, in general, farther purification, which is best attained by again throwing it down with acetate of lead, and repeating the steps of the present paragraph. The fluid is now to be concentrated by evaporation, and subjected to the tests for meconic acid, more particularly to the action of perchloride of iron when the quantity is small. If there is evidently a considerable quantity of acid, a portion should be evaporated till it yields crystalline scales, which have always a yellowish tint, and these are to be heated in a tube to procure its arborescent crystalline sublimate. About a sixth of a grain of meconic acid, however, is required to try the latter test conveniently.”*

Although these tests may appear ample and satisfactory, yet we must remember that in most cases the search will be for substances which exist in small proportions in opium; (as for example, Turkey opium probably does not contain more, at the highest, than ten per cent of morphia.) The operator must therefore expect to find only minute traces, while in many instances he may be altogether disappointed. This has happened to accurate chemists, as Christison, Buchner and Reid.†

I have mentioned that the solution of meconic acid, as well

* Christison, p. 608. This process is founded, as Dr. Christison states, on that proposed by Lassaigne some years previous. The directions contained in the three first paragraphs, are principally taken from him. For the details of Lassaigne's process, see Brande's Journal, vol. 17, p. 163; Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 231.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 33, p. 70. Christison, p. 609. Reid's Chemistry, 2d edition, p. 416. When every other proof has failed, the peculiar odour of opium has in several instances remained, so as to identify the substance.

as its crystals, acquire an intense red colour with the permuriate of iron. Now it has been found, that another acid, the *sulpho-cyanic*, is affected in a precisely similar manner by that test. Were this substance a rare one, as was once supposed, there could be little danger of mistake. But Gmelin and Tiedemann, and subsequently other observers, have found it to exist in *human saliva*.

Dr. Christison observes, "that it is impossible to procure a blood red coloration from the saliva, except by evaporating a large quantity to dryness, and dissolving the residue in a small quantity of water;" and he questions whether it can be separated at all after the saliva is mixed with the complex contents of the stomach.* Dr. O'Shaughnessy has proposed the following, as a means of discriminating between the two acids. Add a small quantity of a solution of pure potash. This destroys the colour of the sulpho-cyanate, making it a dead pale white, but renders that produced by the meconate more intense. He further adds, that by the use of sulphuretted hydrogen, as directed in paragraph 3, any sulpho-cyanate of lead that may be formed, is dissolved away by the water employed in the ablution of the precipitate.† The precipitate, with the nitromuriate of gold, will also serve to distinguish it.

Edmund Castaing, of a respectable family in France, studied the medical profession with ardour and success, and in due time became a physician. He was very intimate with Hippolyte and Augustus Ballet, young men of fortune. The former was out of health, and consulted him as a medical adviser.

In this state of things, Hippolyte died on the 22d of October, 1822. Having been deemed an invalid for some time, his death did not become the subject of remark, and Augustus remained on as intimate terms as before with Castaing. It was, however, ascertained subsequently, that while the disease under which Hippolyte was labouring, (consumption,) was pursuing its usual slow course, he was suddenly seized with severe symptoms, which carried him off in four days. He died in the arms of Castaing, and according to that per-

* Christison, p. 611.

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 7, p. 33.

son would not see his relatives. He made a will in favour of Castaing, and did not mention his brother's name in it. This will, Castaing, according to the testimony of a female witness, sold to Augustus for 100,000 francs. The physicians who examined the body of Hippolyte, stated that there was emaciation present, but not sufficient to warrant them in ascribing death to exhaustion, (*epuisement*.)

On the 30th of May, after having spent two days in excursions in the country, Augustus Ballet, accompanied by Castaing, arrived at St. Cloud, in a small carriage, and without his usual establishment of servants. They put up at a tavern. In the course of the evening, Augustus complained of being unwell. He took some warm wine, to which sugar and citron were added by Castaing, but without relief. He passed the night in a disturbed state. Castaing left him at 4 A. M. to take, as he said, a walk in the park; but instead of doing this, he went to Paris, called at the shop of a druggist, and demanded and obtained twelve grains of an emetic. He signed an order for this, as the shop boy hesitated to give him so large a quantity. He then went to the shop of Chevallier, a *pharmacien*, and bought a *demi gros* of acetate of morphine, saying that he wanted it for experiments on animals. He mounted his cabriolet, returned with all speed, and found Augustus still ill. He now prescribed some cold milk, and gave it to his patient. In five minutes he was seized with convulsions, and in half an hour violent vomiting came on, followed by purging. The servant of Augustus received a note from Castaing on this day, (31st) saying that his master was ill. He hurried to St. Cloud, and found him labouring under the above.

A physician (Dr. Pigarche) was sent for, who arrived at 11 A. M. Augustus was easy; the vomiting had ceased, but there was some fever; the tongue was yellow, and there was slight pain in the bowels. Deeming the disease cholera morbus, on the representation of Castaing, he prescribed emollient fomentations, light diet, and an enema. At two o'clock he found Ballet free of fever, and expressing a desire to return to Paris. At 4 P. M. and at 7 P. M. though there was

some excitement, yet every thing argued favourably. He was sent for at 11 P. M., and found his patient quite insensible, unable to swallow, bathed in a cold sweat, with a small pulse, a burning skin; the jaws locked, the neck rigid, the abdomen tense, and the limbs affected by spasmodic convulsions. Bleeding produced a slight remission of these symptoms. At 6 A. M. Dr. Pelletan arrived from Paris. Stertorous breathing was now present. Sinapisms and even boiling water were applied to the legs, but they excited but little sensibility. The pupil of the eye was noticed at this time to be much contracted. Death followed an hour after mid-day.

The only appearances found on the dead body that bore any relation to the poison suspected, were congestion of blood and serous effusion in the vessels of the cerebral membranes.

Vauquelin and Barruel analyzed the liquid found in the stomach, but could find no trace of poison.

Orfila, on his examination, stated that the symptoms present were common to poisoning and ordinary diseases, and further, that poisons might cause death and yet not be detected, owing to their removal by vomiting or absorption.

Magendie concurred in these opinions.

Chaussier was a witness for the accused.

He was one of the commission that examined the body of Augustus and the liquid found in the stomach. He stated that there was only a slight irritation of the stomach, and not a vestige of poison. He was asked whether the appearances on dissection might not be those of vegetable poisons? He answered, no. Might they not have been absorbed into the blood? Yes, but it requires a long time. But when there is vomiting and purging? Then every thing is evacuated. He was also asked whether the acetate of morphine could be detected? *Yes, to a molecule.* But when it is absorbed, is it then possible to find it? It requires a long time to absorb, and when the poison cannot be found, the *corpus delicti* is wanting. Does acetate of morphine produce a dilatation of the pupil? Yes. You do not agree with Dr. Orfila? I have experience that Dr. Orfila does not possess.

M. Roussel, the counsel for the accused, urged that the

symptoms were those of an inflammatory disease. It might have been excited by the fatigue of his excursions, by his long walks in the sun, the warm wine, &c.

It was proved that Castaing had paid much attention to the subject of poisons, and had bought a considerable quantity of acetate of morphine. He was convicted and executed. Whether from circumstantial or moral evidence, there seems to be little doubt of his guilt in France, but the proofs of it, as developed on the trial, are certainly imperfect. It is highly probable that if Augustus was poisoned, other deleterious substances besides the acetate of morphine were administered.*

A man was poisoned a few years since at Glasgow, by adding laudanum to strong beer. The peculiar smell of opium was manifest in the liquor extracted by the stomach pump. The magistrates requested Dr. Ure to examine the contents of the stomach. "One portion treated with acetate of lead, afforded an insoluble precipitate, from which an acid, strongly reddening permuriate of iron was separated, by the agency of the sulphuric. Another portion afforded directly, with a few drops of the permuriate of iron, an evident reddish brown tinge. The chemical facts, joined to a body of circumstantial evidence, led to a conviction of the guilty pair, a man and wife, who were accordingly executed."†

Treatment. Probably no poison is more frequently used in this country as the means of suicide, than opium. It hence becomes a matter of special importance that the physician be well acquainted with the modes of preventing its effects, and for much useful information on this, we are greatly indebted to the investigations of Orfila.

* Causes Celebres du XIX. Siecle, vol. 4, p. 1 to 103. Proces de Castaing. Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence, p. 363. Christison, p. 634. London Medical Repository, vol. 21, p. 87. Considerations Medico-legales sur un accusation d'empoisonnement par l'acetate de morphine, par E. S. Montmahou, M. D. &c., 8vo. Paris, 1823. This last denies that any poison was given.

In Scotland, the felonious administration of laudanum or other narcotic or deleterious drug, with intent to produce stupefaction, whether in malice or to facilitate the commission of any crime, subjects the offender to severe punishment. (Alison's Principles of the Criminal Law of Scotland, p. 629.) I presume the law in this state (see vol. 2, p. 241 of this work,) would include this under the term *injury*.

† Dr. Ure, in Brande's Journal, N. S., vol. 7, p. 60.

The first indication is to remove the poison from the stomach. This is to be attempted in various ways. *By emetics* of sulphate of zinc, or sulphate of copper. The former is by far the best, and it should be given in doses of half a drachm or two scruples, to be repeated, at short intervals, if the first should fail to operate. The throat should also be irritated with a feather. At the same time, in order to insure its action, it is of great use to keep the patient roused as much as possible. Two persons should be constantly employed in dragging him up and down, and not permit him to sink into a state of insensibility.*

The sulphate of copper, although it is emetic in its operation, is not by any means so safe a prescription as the former. It is, as we have already stated, an active poison, and if retained long in the stomach may prove injurious.† But of all the forms of emetic medicines in use, tartar emetic is most to be discouraged. I have only to refer to its effects in large doses. And the practitioner, before he gives it, should recollect the possibility of its retention in the stomach, without producing vomiting. The torpid condition of that viscus is one of the main difficulties with which we have to contend. In confirmation of this opinion, Dr. Christison quotes a case in which a scruple of tartar emetic was administered to cause vomiting, but to no purpose. When it had remained fifteen minutes, sulphate of zinc was also given, and with immediate effect. But the patient, after recovering from the immediate consequences, was seized with pain in the stomach and bowels, and diarrhœa, which lasted for several days.‡

A second mode of removing the poison from the stomach, is the use of the *Stomach Pump*. I have adverted to the history of its introduction in a previous page; and I may now add, that it has proved of more service in cases of poisoning

† Successful cases, in which sulphate of zinc was the principal agent, are given by Dr. Kinnis. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 14, p. 603; by Dr. Howison, *ibid.* vol. 18, p. 49; by Dr. Kennedy, *ibid.* vol. 18, p. 343.

‡ Dr. Marcet (*Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 1, p. 77,) used it successfully in an almost desperate case, where six ounces of laudanum had been swallowed. Fifteen grains were given, and they induced vomiting. The patient complained for some days after of soreness in the throat and at the root of his tongue.

§ *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 7, p. 305; case by Mr. McKechnie.

by opium, than in any other. Numerous instances of its utility have accumulated in the periodical journals.*

Dr. Roe, of New-York, relates a case in which a person took two and a half ounces of laudanum, and was seen within three quarters of an hour. He refused to take any thing. The tube of a stomach pump was introduced into the rectum, and fluid injected; and when the intestine was distended, fifteen grains of tartar emetic dissolved in half a gallon of water, were thrown up: nausea and vomiting followed. The injection was repeated, and followed by an enema, which produced purging. The next morning, the patient had nearly recovered.†

“The last method of removing opium from the stomach, is a desperate one, which can only be recommended when emetics by the mouth have utterly failed, and when a stomach pump, or Mr. Bryce’s substitute, cannot be procured. It is an injection of an emetic into the veins. Tartar emetic answers best for this purpose, and its effect is almost certain: a grain is the dose. While injecting it, care must be taken by the operator not to introduce air into the vein.”‡

The next most important part of the treatment, is to keep the patient constantly roused. This is to be accomplished by the means already stated, of dragging him across the room between two persons; and the duration of this exercise should vary, according to circumstances, from three or six to twelve hours; and even if allowed to rest for a short time, he must

* Mr. Jukes, in 1822, particularly called the attention of the English medical profession to the utility of this remedy. (London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 48, p. 384.) Mr. Bryce, as a substitute, proposed a long œsophagus tube, to which a bladder is attached. The fluid is introduced by it into the stomach; and when it is proposed to extract it again, the extremity of the tube and bladder are depressed below the level of the stomach: it thus acts as a syphon. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 23, p. 220.)

Among the cases in which the stomach pump has been successfully used, I can only refer to those by Dr. Moore of New-York, New-York Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 4, p. 91; vol. 6, p. 357. By Dr. Hamersley, *ibid.* vol. 9, p. 235. Dr. Charles A. Lee, *ibid.* vol. 7, p. 518. Dr. Bardsley of Manchester, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 30, p. 306. *Lancet*, vol. 5, p. 218; vol. 6, p. 517; vol. 10, p. 245.

Prof. Alison cured a case with Mr. Bryce’s tube. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 23, p. 416.)

† American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 7, p. 555.

‡ Christison, p. 642.

be roused at short intervals, and any tendency to insensibility counteracted by renewed exercise. It is at this period, also, that dashing cold water over the head and body has been found of especial service in rousing the sensibility of the patient, and it would also seem to ensure the operation of emetics. When, therefore, an emetic has been taken, and its effect is delayed, it is advisable to use the cold water.*

Internal stimulants sometimes prove useful assistants. Ammonia occasionally but carefully applied to the nose, and injections of assafœtida, have each proved of service.†

After the poison has been removed, it is often necessary, in consequence of the fulness and strength of the pulse, and the supervention of apoplectic symptoms, to abstract blood. In several cases, the relief thus afforded has been striking and permanent.‡ “It ought not to be resorted to till the poison is thoroughly removed from the stomach, for it favours absorption.”§

* This treatment, according to Dr. Christison, was first proposed in 1767, by Dr. Grater, a German physician. Successful cases in which it was a leading remedy, are related by Mr. Wray and Dr. Copland, in *Lond. Med. Repos.* vol. 18, p. 26 and 29. By Dr. Crampton, *Dublin Hospital Transactions*, vol. 4.

By Dr. Richardson of Kentucky, (1821,) *Chapman's Journal*, vol. 8, p. 398.

By Dr. Jackson, *Ibid.* vol. 8, p. 150.

By Dr. John B. Beck, *New-York Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 3, p. 474.

By Dr. Staats, *Ibid.* vol. 3, p. 473. In this case, bleeding was also very useful.

Dr. Cross, in an essay on poisoning by opium, (*Transylvania Journal*, vol. 1, p. 469,) has collected all the successful cases up to the period when he wrote.

† Pulling the hair — injecting water in the ears — whipping with cords — slapping between the shoulders, etc. have each been used to produce external irritation, and thus rouse the patient. See Dr. Joseph M. Smith, *Transactions of the Physico-Medical Society of New-York*, p. 239; Dr. Seaman, *New-York Medical Repository*, vol. 3, p. 250.

A case in which emetics produced no effect, and oil of turpentine by the mouth, and in the form of enema, proved successful, is related by Dr. Jenkins, *New-York Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 3, p. 303.

Dr. Fahnestock, in a case apparently hopeless, where the stomach pump proved ineffectual, gave some sulphuric ether. This produced violent strangulating sensations, and aroused the action of the stomach and diaphragm: vomiting followed, and the patient was saved. (*American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 5, p. 250.)

‡ Cases in which venesection has been used with great success, are mentioned by Mr. Richardson, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 17, p. 226.

By Mr. Ross, *Ibid.* vol. 19, p. 247.

By Dr. Rush, in 1801, *New-York Medical Repository*, vol. 5, p. 124.

By Dr. Akerly, *Ibid.* vol. 16, p. 10. Dr. A. mentions a curious fact that occurred under his notice. A lunatic stole two ounces of laudanum, which were supersaturated with carbonate of potash, and swallowed them without any bad effects.

By Dr. Young, *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 13, p. 61.

By Ollivier of Angers, and Marye, *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 8, p. 270.

By Dr. D'Outrepoint, in a pregnant female, (from a German journal) *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 5, p. 480.)

§ Christison, p. 644.

Artificial respiration has been employed in some desperate cases, with marked advantage: one indeed proved successful. A middle aged man swallowed half an ounce of crude opium, and soon became lethargic. Emetics were given with considerable effect, but he was left too soon, and fell into a state of complete lethargy, his pulse and respiration being nearly totally gone. Mr. Whately obtained a common bellows, and distended his lungs; this in a few minutes produced a free expiration, and he gradually recovered.* Dr. Ogilvie, of Georgia, has published another successful case in a child ten days old, to whom twenty-five drops of laudanum were given.†

When the patient is in a hopeful way of recovery, purgative enemata are very useful, particularly if we have reason to believe that any of the opium still remains in the intestines. Frequent rubbing of the arms and legs, or sinapisms to the latter, are also often needed, in consequence of the torpor that has been induced.

The experiments of Orfila have demonstrated that the administration of vinegar, lemon juice, or other vegetable acids previous to the evacuation of the poison by vomiting, *will accelerate and aggravate the action of the opium*; but that when the opium has been previously expelled, water acidulated with vinegar or any other vegetable acid, will tend to diminish and correct its effects. Coffee, when prepared in the form of strong decoction or infusion, rapidly lessens the symptoms, but cannot be considered as an antidote. The only substance which he deems entitled to that name, is a decoction of nutgalls. This throws down the active principles of an infusion of opium, and may consequently diminish its effects, previous to the necessary attempts for its removal.

Hyoscyamus niger, L. (Black henbane.) Naturalized in the Northern States and in Canada. Several cases are on record of the baneful effects of this plant. Wepfer mentions that several monks made a repast on the roots of wild endive, among

* Medical Observations and Inquiries, vol. 6, p. 331.

† North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 277. Dr. Ware, of Boston, has also given a case where it was repeatedly employed with advantage, but the child sunk under the effects of whooping cough.

which were mixed by mistake two roots of henbane. In a few hours, some experienced vertigo; others a burning of the tongue, lips and throat. Severe pains were also felt in the iliac region, and in all the joints. The intellectual faculties and organs of vision were perverted, and they gave themselves up to actions that were mad and ridiculous: they, however, recovered. In other cases, a haggard countenance, dilatation of the pupils, difficult breathings, small and intermittent pulse, loss of speech, trismus, and temporary loss of intellect, have been the principal symptoms, while the extremities have been observed cold and nearly paralyzed. A glyster prepared of a decoction of henbane, caused a numbness and loss of motion of the upper and lower extremities, propensity to sleep, and difficulty of hearing.*

Dr. Patouillat, of Toucy in France, saw nine persons poisoned with this root. Some were speechless and convulsed; others occasionally howled; in all, there was a protrusion of the eyes, contortion of the mouth, and delirium. Emetics relieved them, but their sight was for some days affected, and all objects appeared red like scarlet.†

The vapours of this plant and of belladonna are said to have been lately used by Hufeland in nervous affections. When exposed to these, even although precautions were taken to prevent the fumes from reaching the face, profuse perspiration ensued, with a sense of fulness in the head, and sometimes tremors, difficult respiration, and vertigo.

On animals, the juice and decoction of the root produced lethargic effects, but very seldom any giddiness or convulsions. When applied to the cellular texture, death ensued sooner, and vomiting occurred in one case, but generally the comatose symptoms were all that were observed. No inflammation was noticed in the stomach; the lungs were occasionally livid, and black blood was observed in the heart.

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 135. Foderé, vol. 4, p. 25.

† Philosophical Transactions, vol. 40, p. 446. See also additional cases, by Dr. Stedman, in *ibid.* vol. 47, p. 194; by Sir Hans Sloane, *Ibid.* vol. 38, p. 99; Choquet and Wilmer, quoted in Christison, p. 648; by Mr. Donaldson, *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 10, p. 242. Case by Dr. Burdach, from eating the capsules. (*Monthly Journal of Medico-Chirurgical Knowledge*, vol. 1, p. 58.)

Hyoscyamus albus, L. (White henbane.) The following case is an example of its effects. In April, 1792, a large quantity was carried by mistake on board the French corvette, *La Sardine*, which the sailors had gathered in one of the isles of Sapienza in the Morea, where the vessel then was. A part of it was put into the ship's copper, and the remainder into those of some of the subaltern officers. At four o'clock they all dined. In a short time, vertigo, vomiting, convulsions, gripes and purging, were generally experienced; and when Dr. Picard, the surgeon, came on board, he observed the gunner making a thousand grimaces and contortions. By keeping up the evacuations, most of them recovered; but those in whom there were none, remained for some time in a sickly condition.*

The *Hyoscyamus aureus*, L. *physaloides* L. and *scopolia*, L. are also deemed poisonous.

Meissner and Brande discovered an alkaloid in the *Hyoscyamus niger*, and which is styled *hyoscyamine*. The vapour of it is very injurious to the eyes, and the most minute fragments placed on the tongue, prove deleterious.†

Solanum dulcamara, L. (Woody nightshade. Bittersweet.) A native of the United States. This, and other species of the same genus, (*Solanum nigrum*, *villosum*, *fuscatum*, &c.) were deemed narcotic poisons, until the experiments of Orfila and Dunal threw some doubt on their activity. Dunal found that a dog might take 180 of the berries of *Solanum dulcamara*, or four ounces of the extract, without inconvenience; and quotes an experiment where thirty-two drachms of the extract were taken by a person in two cases, without injury.‡ Mr. Burnett, however, in the first volume of the Medical Botany, gives cases communicated by Mr. Wheeler, of Bayswater, showing the actual poisonous effects of the berries of

* Fodere, vol. 4, p. 23. There is also a case by Dr. Hamilton, in Edinburgh Physical and Literary Essays, vol. 2, p. 268.

† Tilloch, vol. 57, p. 308. Brande's Journal, vol. 11, p. 205. For Geiger's late Experiments, see Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6, p. 318.

‡ Christison, p. 650. In the 2d edition of Dr. Smith's Forensic Medicine, p. 187, is a case of poisoning by the extract, quoted from Hufeland's Journal. The individual took an ounce of it. It produced vertigo, palsy of the tongue, and cold sweats. It did not, however, prove fatal.

this plant. Several children, from eating them, were seized with violent pain in the intestines, vomiting and purging, and in one instance, a profuse secretion of saliva. They required active remedies to relieve them. Mr. Wheeler adds, that he has known of two fatal cases from their use.

The extract of the *Solanum nigrum*, L. (Common or Garden Nightshade,) possesses, according to Orfila, nearly the power and energy of lettuce opium.

Desfosses obtained an alkaloid from these plants, termed *solanine*, and which produced narcotic effects.

Doubts have lately been thrown on its existence;* but the recent experiments of Otto, who even found it in the potato, (*solanum tuberosum*,) would seem to decide the question. One grain of this was sufficient to kill a rabbit in six hours.†

Lactuca virosa, L. (Strong-scented lettuce.) The extract of this plant in large doses, produces effects similar to those of opium, but a longer period is required to develop them. It acts with more rapidity when applied to the cellular texture, or injected into the veins.

The lettuce opium or extract of the *Lactuca sativa* is much weaker.

Taxus baccata, L. (The yew.) Great diversity of opinion has existed concerning the properties of this plant. Orfila, however, deems it a narcotic.

Dr. Percival relates, that the fresh leaves were administered to three children, of five, four, and three years of age, near Manchester, for worms. Yawning and listlessness soon succeeded, and the oldest vomited a little, and complained of pain in the abdomen; but the others expressed no sign of pain. They all died within a few hours of each other.‡

* Magendie, quoted in London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 4, p. 311.

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 14, p. 117.

‡ Medical Commentaries, vol. 6, p. 33. It is also mentioned, that a drove of cattle (twelve in number) were poisoned in December, 1814, in Montgomeryshire, (Wales,) from eating the branches of this tree. (Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 7, p. 162.) Two cases of death from its leaves and berries, are given by Metzger, p. 397. Mr. Tatem, in Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, vol. 8, p. 91, mentions that two horses were put under a yew tree, which they cropped with eagerness. No unfavourable circumstances appeared for three hours, when having staggered a few paces, they both dropped, and before the harness could be taken off, they were dead. Their stomachs were contracted and inflamed.

Paris quadrifolia, L. (Herb Paris, One-berry, True-love,) occasions vomitings and spasms. The root of *P. polyphylla*, Smith, is also said to be highly poisonous.*

Actæa spicata, L. (Herb Christopher. Bane-berries.) A native of the United States. The berries of this plant are noxious, according to the testimony of Linnæus, Colden, and Le Monnier. It is poisonous to cattle, but sheep and goats eat it.†

Physalis somnifera, L., *Azalea pontica*, L., *Peganum harmala*, L., are deemed narcotics.

PRUSSIC ACID. (*Hydrocyanic Acid*.)

This substance in its concentrated state, is one of the most energetic of poisons, and its virulence varies with its strength.

The pure acid is liquid, limpid and colourless. It has an acrid, pungent taste, and a very peculiar odour, which when diffused through the air, has a distant resemblance to that of bitter almonds. It is an error, however, says Dr. Christison, to suppose that its *odour is the same with that of the almond*.‡ At ordinary temperatures, it decomposes spontaneously within a few hours.

It is therefore the acid diluted with water, that is the article to be found in the apothecary's shop; and there is unfortunately much variety as to its strength, depending on the various processes by which it is made, and the tendency which it also has to decomposition. The medicinal acids on the continent, either alcoholic or watery, vary from one to fifty per cent; and this circumstance will explain the many cases of poisoning that have occurred there. If made according to Vauquelin's method, and which is in common use in England, the per centage will be 3.3.§ But even there the medicinal preparations differ "frightfully."||

* Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 1, p. 380.

† *Actæa spicata* of Michx, includes the *Actæa rubra* of Willd and *A. alba*, Big. which are decidedly distinct. The fruit of both, as well as of *A. racemosa*, L. are noxious.

‡ Dr. A. T. Thomson confirms this. (Cyclopedia of Pract. Med., vol. 3, p. 723.)

§ Christison, p. 653.

|| Everitt, in London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 6, p. 101. He procured samples from different druggists in London, (Apothecaries Hall included,) and found them to vary from 5.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent; and this, though he asked in each for Scheele's acid.

Effects on man. The following case is related on the authority of Hufeland, as an example of its effects. A man about to be taken up as a thief, swallowed an ounce at 2 P. M. He staggered a few steps, and fell. The pulse could not be felt, and there was no trace of breathing. In a few minutes, a single and violent expiration took place. The extremities were cold; the eyes half open and shining, but without any irritability. At night he was stiff. The blood on dissection had the smell of bitter almonds. The pia mater and vessels of the brain were filled with blood. The stomach was highly inflamed, and presented gangrenous spots of the size of a sixpence. The villous coat separated on the slightest pressure of the nails. The intestines were healthy—the liver natural, but filled with black blood. All the blood was collected in the veins, while the arteries were empty, and it was generally of a black-blue colour, fluid, yet thick like oil, and had a most penetrating smell of bitter almonds.*

Orfila also relates the following as communicated to him by M. Fueter. “M. B. professor of chemistry, left, through forgetfulness, a flask, containing alcohol saturated with prussic acid. The servant girl, seduced by the agreeable smell of the liquor, swallowed a small glass of it. At the expiration of two minutes, she fell dead, as if she had been struck with apoplexy. The body was not opened.”†

Dr. B. of Rennes, took two teaspoonsfull of the acid, (prepared by Vauquelin’s process.) In a few seconds, he fell, his teeth were closed—the respiration was difficult, noisy and rattling—the mouth distorted—the extremities cold—the pulse scarcely perceptible—the face and neck red and swelled—the pupils fixed and dilated, and in a word, all the appearances of apoplexy were present. A violent convulsion followed. Antidotes were administered, and after some time, there was a slight vomiting, but he did not recover his senses until nearly three hours had elapsed. Dyspnœa continued, but with enemmas and other applications he gradually recovered. After every evacuation by stool, a quantity of gas was discharged

* London Medical Repository, vol. 4, p. 506.

† Orfila’s Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 147. The professor, I believe, was Magendie.

from his mouth, which had the odour of prussic acid. It was a fortnight before he perfectly recovered.*

Mr. Ferrus was in the habit of using the acid prepared according to Magendie's formula, viz: one part of acid to 128 of syrup. He directed half an ounce to be administered to fourteen epileptics at the Bicetre. Instead of using this, the attendants obtained some which had been prepared according to the French Pharmacopœia, (one part of acid to one of syrup.) By the time the medicine had been administered to the seventh, the first was dead and the others expired within forty-five minutes.† The symptoms in all were first convulsions and then coma.

The inspiration of this substance when diffused in the state of vapour through his laboratory, caused in Dr. Ittner, oppression and painful respiration, giddiness, vertigo, and burning heat.‡

Dr. Heller gives the case of a chemist in Paris, who applied a bottle of Scheele's acid to his nose. He was soon seized with extreme tightness of the chest, and tetanic stiffness of the whole body. His legs in particular were immovable. The vapours of ether and ammonia were applied to his nose with some success; but the circulation remained extremely low, not rising for some time above forty. The distress continued during the day, but he gradually recovered.§

It is not necessary after this to caution the physician in his administration of this highly powerful agent.||

* London Medical Repository, vol. 23, p. 233.

† Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 13, p. 461. Other cases are mentioned by Hufeland, Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 5, p. 467. Mertzsdorff, Edinburgh Medical and Surg. Jour. vol. 22, p. 232. Dr. Whiting, Lancet, N. S. vol. 6, p. 250. Leuret, Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 4, p. 422. Case of Mrs. Latten, dead in twelve minutes from taking, by mistake, a drachm and a half of the acid, Lancet, N. S. vol. 12, p. 257. A case said to have occurred near Leeds in England, Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 10, p. 180. Christison, p. 664, &c.

‡ American Medical Recorder, vol. 2, p. 530. See also the effects produced on Professor Silliman, from breaking a bottle in his laboratory. Silliman's Journal, vol. 2, p. 93.

§ London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 52, p. 63,

|| The following articles deserve perusal on this point—on the deleterious effects of the hydrocyanic acid, by Dr. Randolph of Philadelphia. American Med. Recorder, vol. 4, p. 456. Review of Granville's treatise on prussic acid. Ibid. vol. 4, p. 562.

There is, however, one point to which I may briefly advert. It is whether prussic acid given medicinally, causes ptyalism. This is asserted by Drs. Elliotson, Granville and Macleod, to have occurred in some cases. (Christison, p. 663; London Me-

There are two questions which may be asked in medico-legal trials, which the physician should be prepared to answer. They are judiciously considered by Dr. Christison. *Within what time may hydrocyanic acid prove fatal, and how long is it before it begins to operate?*

Now very large doses, as we have seen, cause death in a few seconds; but generally speaking, the cases that require examination have not been produced thus. It is the ordinary medicinal acid at various degrees of strength, that is the agent.

As to the first, it is supposed by Christison on the researches of Schubarth, that if an individual survive forty minutes, he will generally recover.

The last question came up for consideration on a late trial in England. An apothecary's maid servant at Leicester who was pregnant by her master's apprentice, was found one morning dead in bed, and obviously poisoned by hydrocyanic acid. The body was in a composed posture, with the arms crossed over the trunk and the bed clothes pulled closely up to the chin; and at her right side lay a small narrow necked phial, from which about five drachms of the acid had been taken, and which was corked and wrapped in paper.

The question arose, whether all these acts could be performed by the deceased before becoming insensible. To settle this point, Mr. Macaulay, Mr. Paget and other medical men of Leicester, experimented on animals, and the result was unfavourable to the supposition, since one dog was killed with four drachms in eight seconds, and others in even less time. Dr. Christison, although inclining generally in favour of the opinion deducible from these, supposes it possible that occasionally the acid may not act with such extreme rapidity.

The principal circumstantial testimony in favour of the prisoner was, that he must have passed through three doors without noise, and one occupied room, in order to arrive at the apartment of the deceased.*

dical and Physical Journal, vol. 49, p. 128.) They are not, however, numerous. By others this occurrence is attributed to the cyanide of mercury from which is prepared; but not with much probability.

* Christison, p. 666. London Medical Gazette, vol. 8, p. 580. Trial of Freeman for the murder of Judith Burwell, April, 1829.

In a case quoted by Dr. Christison, the bed clothes had been drawn up as high as the breast, and the right arm extended down beneath the clothes. In another, a person swallowing some acid by mistake, called out for hartshorn, and was found reclining on the steps of the cellar where he had been sent. With the cry for aid, however, he expired.

The smallest dose that has proved fatal is that given to the Parisian epileptics. Each of them took twenty grains of the medicinal acid, which quantity ought to have contained only two-thirds of a grain of pure acid.*

Appearances on dissection. In addition to Hufeland's case already given, I may mention the following:

In the persons poisoned at the Parisian Hospital, the back part of the body was livid, the head, face and lips bloated, and of a violet colour, frothy blood issued from the mouth and nose, the eyes were closed and the body rigid. The cellular tissue of the stomach and small intestines, was highly injected, and in one place dark; but there was no odour of hydrocyanic acid from the stomach. Its inner membrane had red patches. So also in the small intestines and at the point corresponding with the external blackness, there was blood effused between the mucous and muscular coats. The liver spleen and kidneys were healthy, but highly gorged with black blood. The heart was healthy, but contained no blood. The great arteries were empty, but the great veins gorged with black fluid blood. The lungs were slightly gorged, and the windpipe was of a deep red, and its ramifications filled with a bloody froth. The sinuses and veins of the brain were filled with fluid blood; but there was no effusion. The brain was soft.†

In other instances the odour of bitter almonds has been very perceptible. It is mentioned by Leuret and Hufeland.

Rigidity of the limbs is also of slow occurrence. In Mertzdorff's case there was an erection and marks of an emission of semen, and the blood was violet coloured; but there was

* Orfila, quoted by Christison, p. 669.

† Orfila, *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 507. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 33, p. 221. The dissections were made by Adelon, Marc and Marjolin.

no odour. In other respects, the examination corresponded with those already given.*

Effects on animals. Two drops of the acid prepared according to the process of Scheele, and which consequently contained considerable water, caused a bitch to stagger, fall and vomit. Eight drops induced weakness, plaintive cries, purging, falling down, tetanic stiffness, dilatation of the pupils, paralysis, insensibility, and at length sleep. "In fifteen minutes the animal rose up, passed some urine, experienced an opisthotonos, and in half an hour was recovered." Thirty or forty drops destroy dogs and cats in six, twelve or fifteen minutes after taking them, and the blood is all found in the veins, the arteries being empty, while the muscles are pale. Convulsions generally attend the administration of this poison.

Animals of various classes equally sink under its effects—a carp who was made to swallow twenty-four drops—snails, helices, leeches, crabs, lobsters, bees, ants and grasshoppers. A cow, according to Emmert, died with all the phenomena of opisthotonos, a few seconds after injecting half a drachm into the trachea.†

M. Robert exposed animals to the aperture of a matrass, in which prussic acid had been distilled, and the air of which consequently was a mixture of the atmospheric fluid with the vapour of this acid. Birds, rabbits, cats and dogs, all died in a short space of time—from an instant to six minutes. The liquid acid in its pure state, and also dissolved in alcohol, was equally, but not so promptly destructive. He examined a dog destroyed by it. The brain was healthy, but exhaled the odour of prussic acid. The tongue was soft, bluish, and hung out of the mouth. The mucous membrane of the trachea was injected. The lungs were of a bright red hue, and the

* Leuret, *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 4, p. 422. Mertzdorf, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 22, p. 232. Schubarth explains the presence or absence of the odour (on which he has made numerous researches) by stating that if the dose be sufficient to cause death in ten minutes, the peculiar odour will always be remarked in the heart, lungs and great vessels, provided the body has not been exposed to rain or a current of air, and is early examined; but if life be prolonged from ten to thirty minutes, or under circumstances opposite to those just named, the odour may not be noticed, since the acid is rapidly discharged by the lungs, or it may be decomposed. (Christison, p. 671.)

† Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 142 to 146.

heart was filled with very dirty deep red blood. The veins contained thick and dark coloured blood. The lungs and heart, and their contents, exhaled the odour of prussic acid.*

It is hardly necessary to add, that the concentrated acid acts with the rapidity of lightning. I subjoin some references to additional experiments.†

Tests. These have been particularly and recently examined by Lassaigne of Paris, Professor Tunner of London, and Professor Orfila.‡ Instead, therefore, of the tests mentioned in a former edition, I will state such as they appear to have determined.

(a.) *The peculiar odour.* On this, I have already remarked. It is asserted by Orfila, but doubted by Christison, that the smell is perceptible when no chemical agent is delicate enough to detect the acid. Its occasional absence is also an objection to a too great dependance on it.

(b.) *Sulphate of copper* forms with hydrocyanic acid when rendered alkaline with a little potash, a greenish precipitate, which becomes nearly white on the addition of a little hydrochloric (muriatic) acid. This last acid redissolves some *oxide* of copper thrown down by the potash, and the precipitate is then the cyanuret of copper. Lassaigne observes that this test will act on the poison when dissolved in 20,000 parts of water.

(c.) *The salts of the protoxide of iron*, if the acid be rendered alkaline by potash, produce a grayish green precipitate,

* See his experiments in the London Medical Repository, vol. 3, p. 243 to 249.

† Essay on prussic acid, by Duvignau and Parent. (American Medical Recorder, vol. 2, p. 573.) Experiments by Dr. Davie, Eclectic Repertory, vol. 10, p. 246. A few drops thrown on the eye of a cat caused death. Annals of Philosophy, vol. 12, p. 23. It is here stated, that Magendie dipped a rod into the acid prepared according to Gay-Lussac's method, and brought it in contact with the tongue of an animal. Death ensued before the rod could be withdrawn. Gay-Lussac's essay on prussic acid, in the Annals, vols. 7 and 8, and Magendie's, in Brande's Journal, vol. 4, p. 347. Krimer's Experiments, in Bulletin des Sciences Médicales, vol. 13, p. 124. Orfila, Annales d'Hygiène, vol. 1, p. 504. Magendie on its external application, Lancet, N. S., vol. 15, p. 146. Christison's Experiments, Treatise on Poisons, p. 657. He noticed tetanus as a frequent occurrence. Garret and Hastings' experiments in Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 2, p. 317, 319.

‡ Lassaigne, Brande's Journal, vol. 13, p. 397. He proposed the tests of sulphate of copper and nitrate of silver, and I rather imagine that Dr. Granville first proposed the sulphate of iron. London Medical Gazette, vol. 2, p. 651. Turner, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 30, p. 344. Orfila, Lancet, N. S., vol. 4, p. 737. Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 1, p. 489.

which, on the addition of a little sulphuric acid, becomes of a deep *Prussian blue* colour. The common green vitriol* will answer for this purpose, and even the salts of peroxide of iron may be used, since they are, unless very carefully prepared, never altogether free of the *protoxide*. But it is shown by Turner, in opposition to Lassaigne and others, that the salts of the pure peroxide have no such effect. They cause, with the potash, a brownish precipitate, which is redissolved on the addition of sulphuric acid, leaving the solution limpid. Dr. Turner also deems this test more delicate than the former one.†

(d.) *Nitrate of silver* gives a *white* precipitate, with a diluted solution of acid, and this precipitate (cyanuret of silver) is distinguished from the other white salts of silver by being insoluble in nitric acid at ordinary temperatures, but easily soluble in it at its boiling temperature. The precipitate also, when dried and heated emits cyanogen, which is known by its beautiful flame.‡

Orfila recommends, as the best method for ascertaining the *strength* of a solution of hydrocyanic acid, to throw down the nitrate of silver, and dry the precipitate: a hundred parts of this will correspond to 20.33 of the pure acid.

As to the detection of this poison, *when mixed with animal matters*, Leuret and Lassaigne have made some researches. They found, that if the body of an animal poisoned with this acid is unburied for three days, the poison can no longer be detected; but that if it is buried within twenty-four hours, the poison may be found after a longer interval, but never after eight days. The reason of this has been already intimated.§

* Proto-sulphate of iron, *Copperas*.

† It is very important to understand the distinction taken by Dr. Turner. "The formation of Prussian blue (he remarks) from prussic acid, by admixture with a salt of iron and potash, does not occur when the iron is strictly at its maximum of oxidation. A very minute quantity of the protoxide, however, gives rise to the production of Prussian blue, which is rendered obvious by dissolving the precipitated oxide by a slight excess of sulphuric acid." (*Edinburgh Journal of Science*, N. S., vol. 2, p. 217.)

‡ Mr. Barry also adds, that the cyanuret of silver may be further verified by its redissolving when a drop of caustic ammonia is applied. (*London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine*, vol. 4, p. 152.)

§ Christison, *Brande's Journal*, N. S. vol. 1, p. 480. It is possible, however, that the poison may be detected somewhat later, as the iron test, in the form proposed by

For the detection of the acid, in these instances, Orfila advises that a piece of writing paper, moistened with caustic potash, be dipped in the mixed fluids. This paper should then be touched with a solution of the sulphate of iron; and if hydrocyanic acid is present, the usual blue colour, with a tinge of green, will appear, and this will become more blue by exposure. Purified animal charcoal alone without heat, will sometimes destroy the colour of the fluid, and permit it to be tested by the reagents already enumerated.*

If neither of these modes is found to answer, the fluid should then be distilled. Dr. Christison recommends that the filtered contents be previously neutralized with sulphuric acid, if they are alkaline, so as to fix the ammonia which may have been disengaged by putrefaction; and then distil the product slowly from a vapour bath, till an eighth part has passed over it into the receiver. The distilled fluid should then be tested with the protosulphate of iron.

It has been objected to this last process, that hydrocyanic acid may be formed during the distillation, by the decomposition of animal matter. Undoubtedly in some instances it appears to have been thus generated; but in the present state of our knowledge, all that can be done to avoid this occurrence, is not to press the heat of the vapour bath too much.

The application of the tests has already been made in medico-legal cases. In the instance of Ramus, the particulars of whose murder is mentioned at page 90 of this volume, the facts ascertained led to the suspicion that he had not been able to offer any resistance; and it was hence suggested that prussic acid might have been previously given.

At the end of seven days, when the examination was made, the matters found in the stomach had a sharp odour, "*ayant quelque chose de vineux.*" They were also distinctly acid; and on distillation, the smell resembled *that of bitter almonds*. The tests above recommended, were now applied. Nitrate of silver gave a curdled white precipitate, which, when treated

Turner, was not used by them. A case in which Lassaigne could not succeed in detecting the poison after thirty-eight hours, is given by Leuret, in *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 4, p. 422.

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 1, p. 493. *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 806.

with nitric acid and the application of heat, dissolved nearly altogether. Sulphate of copper produced a minute milky precipitate. It was evident, from these circumstances, that hydrocyanic acid was present in the stomach in minute quantities, and the probability was great that the murdered person had taken it. The only doubt was, whether it might not have been generated from the matters contained in the stomach.*

Antidotes. The substances which have the highest character for this purpose, are powerful and diffusible stimuli. *Ammonia* was first recommended by Mr. John Murray of London.† He administered fatal doses of the acid to animals, and immediately thereafter applied ammonia to their nostrils: they invariably recovered. Dupuy confirmed these results by experiments on horses;‡ and the general course of observation, with some fluctuations, goes strongly to show its efficacy. In the latest publication of Orfila, he speaks highly of the application of the vapour, and states that he has thus recovered several dogs; but he, as also Dr. Herbst, attach little value to swallowing the liquid ammonia.§ It should be remembered that ammonia is often extremely acrid, and may cause inflammation of the mouth and throat.

Chlorine. This was first proposed in 1822, by Riauz, a chemist of Ulm, and many experiments on animals have verified its value. "According to Orfila, animals which have taken a dose of poison sufficient to kill them in fifteen or eighteen minutes, will be saved by inspiring water impregnated with a fourth part of its volume of chlorine, even although the application of the remedy be delayed till the poison has operated for four or five minutes."||

The *cold affusion* was first advised by Dr. Herbst of Göttingen, and it is certainly a most valuable remedy. Even in

* Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 9, p. 363 to 379. The case is reported by Chevallier and Boys de Loury. Some acid was found in a phial in the room of the murderer.

† Edinburgh Journal of Science, vol. 2, p. 214.

‡ London Medical Repository, vol. 26, p. 441.

§ Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 1, p. 512.

|| Christison, p. 675. Other experimenters have tested its efficacy. Persoz and Nonat, Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 4, p. 435. Simeon, Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 5, p. 421. Dr. T. D. Mitchell says that the *American Fire King* (a rival of Chabert) took chlorine water, to prevent the effects from swallowing prussic acid. (Chemistry, p. 184.)

the stage of insensibility and paralysis, it has been successfully used. It often requires to be repeated several times; and in extreme cases, the first sign of amendment is a renewal of the spasms of the muscles.* It should be used in connexion with the inhalation of chlorine or ammonia.

Oil of turpentine, coffee, &c. have deservedly lost their reputation as remedies in these cases.

The *hydrocyanates of ammonia and potash* are as poisonous as the original acid. This has been proved by the experiments of Coullon, Robiquet, Magendie and Schubarth;† but the *triple prussiates* (ferrocyanates) do not possess deleterious properties. The *sulphocyanic acid*, although once supposed to be a very active poison, is not found to act with much energy on animals. Dr. Westrumb of Hammeln, however, observed very active effects from the *sulphocyanate of potash*. Two scruples dissolved in water, killed a dog in seven minutes.‡

We come next to the consideration of those vegetables which contain hydrocyanic acid, and of which it constitutes the poisonous ingredient. They may be arranged as follows:

Prunus lauro-cerasus, L. *Cerasus lauro-cerasus*, D. C. Cherry laurel.

Prunus avium, L. *Cerasus avium*, D. C. Black cherry; its kernels.

Prunus padus, L. *Cerasus padus*, D. C. Bird cherry tree, Cluster cherry; its bark.

Prunus virginiana, L. *Cerasus virginiana*, Mx. Wild cherry tree.

Prunus nigra, Ait. *Cerasus nigra*, D. C. Black cherry tree.

Prunus caroliniana, Ait. *Cerasus caroliniana*, Mx. Wild orange.

The three last are natives of the United States.

Amygdalus communis, L. Bitter almonds.

Amygdalus persica, L. *Persica vulgaris*, D. C. The peach; its kernels, leaves and flowers.

Sorbus aucuparia, L. *Pyrus aucuparia*, D. C. Mountain ash, Rowan tree.

The poison obtained from these various substances exists in two forms—as a distilled water, and as an essential oil; and it is in these products that the peculiar odour, already spoken of, is observed. It is present even after the acid is thrown down by the iron test; and, of course, it is a probable conjecture that it is owing to some substance other than the acid itself.

* Herbst, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 32, p. 229. Orfila confirms its value. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 1, p. 520.)

† Christison, p. 661.

‡ Ibid. p. 663. Tiedemann and Gmelin, in their experiments on digestion, ascertained that the *sulphocyanate of potash* is contained in the human saliva. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 27, p. 420.)

Prunus lauro-cerasus,* (Cherry laurel.) The distilled water of this plant, (doubtless containing variable quantities of the essential oil, and which oil has been shown by Robiquet to possess all the chemical properties of the oil of bitter almonds,) has been proved a poison by numerous experimenters.†

When applied to wounds in animals, it induced vomiting, convulsions, great prostration of strength, diminished sensibility, and death. Injected into the stomach and rectum, it excited a similar train of symptoms, except that in the latter the convulsions were more violent, and tetanus of the extremities was present. Its action was most rapid and intense when injected into the jugular vein.‡

Several cases are recorded of its effects on the human subject. One of the earliest happened in Dublin in 1728. Martha Boyse, servant to a person who sold large quantities of this water, gave to her mother a bottle of it, and by the latter it was given to Frances Eaton, her sister. Mrs. Eaton was a shopkeeper, and thinking it a compliment to her customers, offered them some. Among others, one Mary Whaley drank of it; went to another shop, and in about a quarter of an hour, complained of a violent disorder in her stomach. She was carried home, and from that time lost her speech, and died in about an hour, without vomiting or purging, or any convulsions. Mrs. Ann Boyse was informed of this, and came immediately to her sister. She affirmed that it could not have been the cordial that caused the death, and to convince her of it, she filled out three spoonfuls and drank it, and shortly af-

* Schrader, an apothecary at Berlin, was the individual who discovered that the prussic acid is contained in the aqua lauro-cerasi and the distilled water of the flowers of the peach tree, as likewise in the infusion of bitter almonds. (London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 10, p. 95.) Bergmann, also an apothecary at Berlin, discovered, in 1811, that the bark of the *Prunus padus* contained a notable quantity of it. (Annals of Philosophy, vol. 5, p. 23.) See also a paper by Vauquelin, on the presence of prussic acid in vegetables, from the *Annales de Chimie*. (Repertory of Arts, 2d series, vol. 2, p. 461.) He detected this substance in the kernels of apricots.

† Orfila enumerates the following: Madden, Mortimer, Brown, Langrish, Nicholls, Stenzelius, Heberden, Watson, Vater, Rattray, the Abbe Rozier, Duhamel and Fontana; and we may add, Robiquet and Taddei. The last made his experiments at Florence, in the laboratory of the Marquis Ridolfi. (London Medical Repository, vol. 17, p. 431.)

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 143 to 153. Also an analysis of the experiments of Fontana, in the Medical Commentaries, vol. 12, p. 106.

ter, two more. In a few minutes she died, without a groan or convulsions.*

Foderé says, that when he was attending his studies at Turin, in 1784, the chamber-maid and man-servant of a noble family of that town, stole, for the purpose of regaling themselves, from their master, a bottle of distilled laurel-water, which they took for an excellent cordial. Fearful of being surprised, they hastily swallowed, one after the other, several mouthfuls of it, but they soon paid the price of their dishonesty, for they expired almost instantly in convulsions. The dead bodies were carried to the university for examination. The stomach was found highly inflamed, but the rest of the organs were in a sound state.†

It has also formed the subject of investigation in a very interesting criminal trial, whether this substance was the cause of death. The case was that of Capt. Donellan for the murder of Sir T. Boughton. Its importance requires that a full abstract should be given.

Sir Theodosius Boughton was a young gentleman of fortune, in the county of Warwick in England, and nearly arrived at the age of twenty-one. His mother, and his brother-in-law, Capt. Donellan, and his sister, Mrs. Donellan, resided with him. In the event of his dying before the period of his majority, the greatest part of his fortune descended to his sister, and Capt. Donellan would thus become entitled to a life estate in it.

Sir Theodosius was labouring under a slight venereal affection, for which he was attended by Mr. Powell, an apothecary

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. 37, p. 84. Communicated by Dr. Madden. His experiments on animals are also contained in the same article. Dr. Mortimer's, in vol. 37, p. 163. Fontana's, in vol. 70, p. 163. In 1782, Dr. Price, of Guilford, having professed to convert mercury into gold, offered to repeat his experiments before a competent tribunal; but the unfortunate philosopher put a period to his existence before the day appointed for his exhibition, by a draught of laurel water. (Paris' Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 2, p. 401.)

† Foderé, vol. 4, p. 27. Even the *leaves* are noxious, as the following extract will show. "1819. Several children at a boarding-school near Richmond, having partaken of some custard, flavoured with the leaves of the cherry-laurel, four of them were taken severely ill. Two of them, a girl of six and a boy of five years of age, fell into a profound sleep, out of which they could not be roused in ten hours; the other two complained of pain in the epigastric region. By proper medical treatment, they all recovered, after an illness of three days." (Paris' Med. Jurisprudence, vol. 2 p. 402.)

at Rugby. His general health is, however, stated to have been good. On the 29th of August, 1780, Mr. Powell sent him a draught to be taken on the next morning, consisting of rhubarb and jalap, each fifteen grains; spirits of lavender, twenty drops; nutmeg water, two drachms; simple syrup, two drachms, and an ounce and a half of simple water. The bottle containing this draught was placed on a shelf in his bed-room.

Sir Theodosius returned in the afternoon of this day from fishing, in good health and spirits. In the morning, a servant awoke him at an early hour, for the purpose of obtaining some straps for a net. He arose, and went into the next room for them. Even now he appeared in perfect health. About 7 A. M. Lady Boughton got up and went into his room, as he had before desired her to give him the medicine. She inquired whether he had taken it, or whether he chose that she should give it to him. He desired her to reach down the draught, which was labelled—"Purging draught for Sir T. B." and she poured it into a cup, for the purpose of his taking it. He had not, however, swallowed more than half of it, when he complained that it was so nauseous to the taste, and disagreeable to the smell, that he did not apprehend he should be able to keep it on his stomach. This remark induced Lady Boughton to smell the draught. She found it very peculiar in this respect, and observed to him, that it smelt very strongly of bitter almonds. He eat some cheese, in order to take the taste out of his mouth, and afterwards washed his mouth with some water. In about two minutes after swallowing the draught, he appeared to struggle very much, as if to keep it down, and had a rattling and guggling at his stomach. These symptoms continued about ten minutes, when he seemed to Lady Boughton to be inclined to go to sleep, and she left the room. She returned again in about five minutes, and was surprised to find him with his eyes fixed upwards, his teeth clenched, and froth running out of his mouth. He died in about half an hour afterwards, having never spoken since he took the draught.

Mr. Donellan came into the room when Sir Theodosius was

dying, and inquired of Lady Boughton where the physic bottle was. She showed it to him. He immediately took it and poured water into it, shook it, and then emptied its contents into the wash-hand basin. And he persisted in doing this with another bottle, although Lady Boughton remonstrated, and objected to his conduct. Mr. Powell was sent for, but arrived after the death of Sir Theodosius.

It appeared also in evidence, that Capt. Donellan had a still in his own room, and that he had used it for distilling roses. Some days after the death of Sir T. he brought this still to one of the servants to be cleaned. It was full of lime, and the lime was wet. On the other hand, it appeared on the cross examination of Lady Boughton, that Sir T. a short time before his death, had bought a quantity of arsenic, in order to poison fish, and some of this was afterwards found locked up in his closet.

Suspicions soon began to be excited as to the cause of this sudden decease; and when these reached the ears of Sir William Wheeler, the guardian of the young baronet, he wrote to Capt. Donellan, informing him of the rumours that were abroad, and requesting him to have the body opened, in order to satisfy the family and the public. Donellan, in his answer, immediately consented to this, and sent for some medical gentlemen. He, however, did not explain to them the cause of his request; and as they were thus led to suppose it merely an ordinary case, they declined the performance, from the circumstance that the body was already far advanced in a state of putrefaction. It is not necessary, nor indeed does it belong to this statement, to enumerate the various devices by which Capt. Donellan evidently attempted to elude the wishes of Sir William Wheeler respecting a dissection. On the 8th day after death, the body was buried, but it was taken up immediately after by the coroner, and opened. It was found swoln and distended, the face was black, the lips swoln and retracted and showing the gums, the teeth black, the tongue protruding, and the skin spotted in many parts of the body. "The orifices and small arch of the stomach, and the intestines, bore the appearance of inflammation, the heart was na-

tural, the lungs were suffused with blood, looking red and spotted in many places, with black specks, and on the back part, the blood had settled in a deep red colour, almost approaching to purple; the diaphragm was in the same state, and in general, upon the depending surfaces of the body, the blood was settled in the like manner; the kidneys appeared black as tinder, and the liver much in the same state." There was also some blood extravasated in the thorax.

Several physicians and surgeons, (Dr. Rattray, Dr. Ashe, Dr. Parsons, Professor of Anatomy at Oxford, and Mr. Wilmer,) deposed, that they had performed experiments on animals with laurel water, and found the effects very similar to the symptoms in the case of Sir Theodosius. Death succeeded in a few minutes, after having been preceded by convulsions. The appearances on dissection also agreed.

It may be mentioned in this place, that Mr. Powell prepared a draught precisely alike to that which he had sent to the baronet, with the addition of some laurel water, and Lady Boughton, on being requested to smell this, stated that it resembled the one she had given to her son.

The counsel for the prisoner, in their cross examination, inquired of the medical witnesses, whether the presence of epilepsy or apoplexy would not account for the symptoms observed? To this, a negative answer was given. Dr. Parsons thought they resembled the latter most, but he was decided in attributing them to the effects of the medicine. Sir Theodosius was young, and of a thin habit, and it was hence very improbable that apoplexy should have caused his death.

They also inquired, whether the appearances observed on dissection might not be the effects of putrefaction. It was allowed that the external might, but not the internal.

On the part of the prisoner, the celebrated JOHN HUNTER was summoned as a witness. As this is probably the only time when that distinguished surgeon appeared before a court to testify on a case of poisoning, and as his examination is peculiarly interesting, I conceive that I shall do a service by quoting it entire.

Mr. JOHN HUNTER *sworn; examined by Mr. Newnham.*

Question. Have you heard the evidence that has been given by these gentlemen?

Answer. I have been present the whole time.

Q. Did you hear Lady Boughton's evidence?

A. I heard the whole.

Q. Did you attend to the symptoms her Ladyship described, as appearing upon Sir Theodosius Boughton, after the medicine was given him?

A. I did.

Q. Can any certain inference upon physical or chirurgical principles be drawn from those symptoms, or from the appearances externally or internally of the body, to enable you, in your judgment, to decide that the death was occasioned by poison?

A. I was in London then. a gentleman, who is in court, waited on me with a copy of the examination of Mr. Powell and Lady Boughton, and an account of the dissection, and the physical gentlemen's opinion upon that dissection.

Q. I don't wish to go into that: I put my question in a general way.

A. The whole appearances upon the dissection, explain nothing but putrefaction.

Q. You have been long in the habit of dissecting human subjects? I presume you have dissected more than any man in Europe?

A. I have dissected some thousands during these thirty-three years.

Q. Are those appearances you have heard described, such, in your judgment, as are the result of putrefaction in dead subjects?

A. Entirely.

Q. Are the symptoms that appeared after the medicine was given, such as necessarily conclude that the person had taken poison?

A. Certainly not.

Q. If an apoplexy had come on, would not the symptoms have been nearly or somewhat similar?

A. Very much the same.

Q. Have you ever known or heard of a young subject dying of an apoplectic or epileptic fit?

A. Certainly; but with regard to the apoplexy, not so frequent. Young subjects will perhaps die more frequently of epilepsies, than old ones. Children are dying every day from teething, which is a species of epilepsy arising from an irritation.

Q. Did you ever, in your practice, know an instance of laurel water being given to a human subject?

A. No, never.

Q. Is any certain analogy to be drawn from the effects of any given species of poison upon an animal of the brute creation, to that it may have upon a human subject?

A. As far as my experience goes, which is not a very confined one, because I have poisoned some thousands of animals, they are very nearly the same. Opium, for instance, will poison a dog similar to a man. Arsenic will have very near the same effect upon a dog, as it would have, I take for granted, upon a man. I know something of the effects of them, and I believe their operations will be nearly similar.

Q. Are there not many things which will kill animals almost instantaneously, that will have no detrimental or noxious effect upon the human subject; spirits, for instance, occur to me?

A. I apprehend a great deal depends upon the mode of experiment. No man

is fit to make one, but those who have made many, and paid considerable attention to all the circumstances that relate to experiments. It is a common experiment, which I believe seldom fails, and is in the mouth of every body, that a little brandy will kill a cat. I have made the experiment, and have killed several cats; but it is a false experiment. In all those cases where it kills the cat, it kills the cat by getting into her lungs, not into her stomach; because if you convey the same quantity of brandy, or three times as much, into the stomach, in such a way as the lungs shall not be affected, the cat will not die. Now in those experiments that are made by forcing an animal to drink, there are two operations going on: one is a refusing the liquor by the animal, its kicking and working with its throat to refuse it; the other is a forcing the liquor upon the animal; and there are few operations of that kind, but some of the liquor goes into the lungs. I have known it from experience.

Q. If you had been called upon to dissect a body, suspected to have died of poison, should you or not have thought it necessary to have pursued your search through the guts?

A. Certainly.

Q. Do you not apprehend that you would have been more likely to receive information from thence, than any other part of the frame?

A. That is the track of the poison, and I certainly should have followed that track through.

Q. You have heard of the froth issuing from Sir Theodosius' mouth, a minute or two before he died: Is that peculiar to a man dying of poison, or is it not very common in many other complaints?

A. I fancy it is a general effect of people dying in what you may call health, in an apoplexy or epilepsy—in all sudden deaths, where a person was a moment before that in perfect health.

Q. Have you ever had an opportunity of seeing such appearances upon such subjects?

A. Hundreds of times.

Q. Should you consider yourself bound, by such an appearance, to impute the death of the subject to poison?

A. No, certainly not: I should rather suspect an apoplexy; and I wish, in this case, the head had been opened, to remove all doubts.

Q. If the head had been opened, do you apprehend all doubts would have been removed?

A. It would have been still farther removed, because, although the body was putrid so that one could not tell whether it was a recent inflammation, yet an apoplexy arises from an extravasation of blood in the brain, which would have laid in a coagulum. I apprehend, although the body was putrid, that would have been much more visible than the effect any poison could have had upon the stomach or intestines.

Q. Then, in your judgment, upon the appearances the gentlemen have described, no inference can be drawn from thence that Sir Theodosius Boughton died of poison?

A. Certainly not; it does not give the least suspicion.

Cross-examined by Mr. Howorth.

Q. Having heard the account to-day that Sir Theodosius Boughton, apparently in perfect health, had swallowed a draught which produced the symptoms described, I ask you whether any reasonable man can entertain a doubt that that draught, whatever it was, produced those appearances?

A. I don't know well what answer to make to that question.

Q. Having heard the account given of the health of this young gentleman, on

the morning previous to taking the draught, and the symptoms that were produced immediately upon taking the draught, I ask your opinion, as a man of judgment, whether you don't think that draught was the occasion of his death?

A. With regard to his being in health, that explains nothing. We frequently, and indeed generally, see the healthiest people dying suddenly; therefore I shall lay little stress upon that. As to the circumstances of the draught, I own they are suspicious: every man is as good a judge as I am.

Court. You are to give your opinion upon the symptoms only — not upon any other evidence given.

Mr. Howorth. Upon the symptoms immediately produced after the swallowing of that draught, I ask whether, in your judgment and opinion, that draught did not occasion his death?

A. I can only say, that it is a circumstance in favour of such an opinion.

Court. That the draught was the occasion of his death?

A. No; because the symptoms afterwards were those of a man dying, who was before in perfect health: a man dying of an epilepsy or apoplexy, the symptoms would give one those general ideas.

Court. It is the general idea you are asked about now, from the symptoms that appeared upon Sir Theodosius Boughton, immediately after he took the draught, followed by his death so very soon after; whether, upon that part of the case, you are of opinion that the draught was the occasion of his death?

A. If I knew the draught was poison, I should say, most probably, that the symptoms arose from that; but when I don't know that that draught was poison, when I consider that a number of other things might occasion his death, I cannot answer positively to it.

Court. You recollect the circumstance that was mentioned, of a violent heaving in the stomach?

A. All that is the effect of the voluntary action being lost, and nothing going on but the involuntary.

Mr. Howorth. Then you decline giving any opinion upon the subject?

A. I don't form any opinion to myself. I cannot form an opinion, because I can conceive if he had taken a draught of poison, it arose from that: I can conceive it might arise from other causes.

Q. If you are at all acquainted with the effects and operations of distilled laurel water, whether the having swallowed a draught of that, would not have produced the symptoms described?

A. I should suppose it would. I can only say this of the experiments I have made of laurel water upon animals, it has not been near so quick. I have injected laurel water directly into the blood of dogs, and they have not died. I have thrown laurel water, with a precaution, into the stomach, and it never produced so quick an effect with me as described by those gentlemen.

Q. But you admit that laurel water would have produced symptoms such as have been described?

A. I can conceive it might.

Mr. Newnham. Would not an apoplexy or epilepsy, if it had seized Sir Theodosius Boughton at this time, though he had taken no physic at all, have produced similar symptoms too?

A. Certainly.

Q. Where a father has died of apoplexy, is that not understood, in some measure, to be constitutional?

A. There is no disease whatever that becomes constitutional, but what can be given to a child. There is no disease which is acquired, that can be given to a child; but whatever is constitutional in the father, the father has a power of giving that to the children, by which means it becomes what is called hereditary. There

is no such thing as an hereditary disease, but there is an hereditary disposition for a disease.

Mr. Howorth. Do you call apoplexy constitutional?

A. We see most diseases are constitutional. The smallpox is constitutional, though it requires an immediate cause to produce the effects. The venereal disease is hereditary. I conceive apoplexy as much constitutional as any disease whatever.

Q. Is apoplexy likely to attack a thin young man, who had been in a course of taking cooling medicines before?

A. Not so likely, surely, as another man; but I have, in my account of dissections, two young women dying of apoplexies.

Q. But in such an habit of body, particularly attended with the circumstance of having taken cooling medicines, it was very unlikely to happen?

A. I do not know the nature of medicines so well, as to know that it would hinder an apoplexy from taking effect.

Court. Give me your opinion in the best manner you can, one way or the other, whether, upon the whole of the symptoms described, the death proceeded from that medicine, or any other cause?

A. I do not mean to equivocate, but when I tell the sentiments of my own mind, what I feel at the time, I can give nothing decisive.

The judge, (the Hon. Francis Buller) in summing up the evidence, after stating that four medical witnesses were decided in attributing the death to the effects of laurel water, made the following comments on the testimony of Mr. Hunter: "For the prisoner, you have had one gentleman called, who is likewise of the faculty, and a very able man. I can hardly say what his opinion is, for he does not seem to have formed any opinion at all of the matter. He, at first, said he could not form an opinion whether the death was or was not occasioned by the poison, because he could conceive that it might be ascribed to other causes. I wished very much to have got a direct answer from Mr. Hunter, if I could, what, upon the whole, was the result of his attention and application to the subject, and what was his present opinion, but he says he can say nothing decisive. So that, upon this point, if you are to determine upon the evidence of the gentlemen who are skilled in the faculty only, you have the *very positive* opinion of four or five gentlemen of the faculty that the deceased died of poison. On the other side, you have what I really cannot myself call more than the *doubt* of another; for it is agreed by Mr. Hunter, that the laurel water would produce the symptoms which are described. He says an epilepsy or apoplexy would produce the same symptoms; but as to an apoplexy, it is not likely to attack so young and so thin a man as Sir Theodosius was; and as to an epilepsy, the other wit-

nesses tell you, they don't think the symptoms which have been spoken of, do show that Sir Theodosius had any epilepsy at the time."

The jury retired for about an hour, and then brought in a verdict of guilty, and Capt. Donellan was executed in a few days thereafter.*

It was, and still is, a prevailing opinion with several, that Sir Theodosius Boughton was not poisoned, and that Capt. Donellan was innocent. Mr. Dease notices this case, as "a melancholy and striking instance of the unhappy effects of popular prejudice, and the fatal consequences of medical ignorance."† Mr. Phillips, in his "Theory of presumptive proof," adduces it as an instance where a man was unwarrantably condemned on circumstantial evidence.‡

I cannot agree with either of these gentlemen, although I will readily allow that too much dependence was placed on the appearances found on dissection. Putrefaction was evidently too far advanced to render them a certain ground of testimony.

As a medical man, it might be enquired of Mr. Dease, whether the symptoms preceding this death have not been most strikingly and astonishingly verified, as *probably* originating from laurel water, by the subsequent investigations of chemists and physicians. Mr. Hunter, in his testimony, says, that he had never known laurel water to act so rapidly as the other medical witnesses described. He had injected it into the veins and into the stomach of animals, *but it never produced so quick an effect*. Who, I would ask, have subsequent experiments proved to be right on this point? Mr. Hunter or the other witnesses. Let the facts I have adduced in previous pages answer this question.

* This abstract is taken from a folio pamphlet entitled "The trial of John Donellan for the wilful murder of Sir Theodosius Edward Allesley Boughton, bart., at the assize at Warwick, on Friday, March 30, 1781, before the Hon. Francis Buller, Esq., one of the justices of his majesty's court of king's bench. The second edition. Taken in short-hand by Joseph Gurney." London, 1781.

† Dease, in Cooper's Tracts, p. 88.

I owe every apology to Dr. Male for incorrectly using his name in a previous edition. Dr. Gordon Smith kindly and truly explained the reason of my mistake in the London Medical Repository, vol. 22, p. 521, and again in his work on Medical Evidence, p. 183.

‡ Appendix to his treatise on the law of evidence, p. 30.

Again, Mr. Phillips, and others, object greatly, that the whole proof as to its being laurel water, rested upon the comparison of the smell. Now I conceive this to be a very satisfactory circumstance. The medicine administered by Mr. Powell did not contain laurel water, while few, very few indeed, of the fluids in common use, possess a smell at all resembling that of bitter almonds. This property is peculiar—confined to a certain number of vegetable products, several of which, even at that day, were known to be deleterious.

Capt. D. had a still in his own room; there were laurels and bays in the garden, (see Amos' testimony.) This is a sufficient answer to Mr. Phillips' question, *where did the prisoner procure it?* Certainly, if there was an intention on the part of Capt. Donellan to use the laurel water for the purpose of poisoning, we have shown *how he could obtain it*.*

Another circumstance has been stated of late years, which adds to the irresistible weight of testimony in this case. It was first pointed out to me by my friend, the Hon. Benj. F. Butler, (now Attorney-General of the United States,) in Colton's Lacon, and if this should be objected to as an anonymous or doubtful authority, it is confirmed by Burnett. The remarks in Lacon are as follows:

"In the case of Donellan, who was executed for poisoning Sir T. Boughton with distilled laurel water, some circumstances were elicited that would have weighed more strongly in the judgment of reflecting minds than any positive but single affidavit which might have been brought to contradict them. A still that had been recently used was discovered on the premises. Donellan was so bad a chemist, that on being asked for what purpose he had procured this machine, he replied, 'that he used it to make lime water to kill the fleas;' not knowing that lime water could only be made by saturating water with lime, and that a still never was and never can be applied to such a purpose. *But in his library there happened*

* The fact of Capt. Donellan's having a still, is cautiously omitted in Mr. Phillips' statement of the case. Nor is this a solitary instance of omission; and in proof of this, I request any gentleman to compare the abstract I have given (and which is taken almost verbatim from the trial,) with that presented by Mr. Phillips. His comments on the medical testimony, are evidently founded on imperfect information concerning the subject in dispute.

to be a single number of the *Philosophical Transactions*, and of this single number, the leaves had been cut only in one place, and this place happened to contain an account of the mode of making laurel water by distillation."*

As to the opinion of medical jurists, I will only adduce that of Christison. "For my part (says he) taking into account the general as well as medical circumstances of the case, I do not entertain a doubt of his guilt."† Sir Henry Halford, in 1833, uses this language. "Sir T. Boughton, who was poisoned by Capt. Donnellan in 1780, with laurel water."‡ I shall have occasion hereafter to notice the regrets of John Hunter concerning his testimony.

The oil of laurel also acts as a violent poison.§

Prunus padus. The essential oil of this contains, according to Schrader, 9.25 per cent of hydrocyanic acid. Both its distilled water and essential oil are poisonous to animals, and even its fruit is injurious to them.

Prunus virginiana. (Wild cherry tree.) Its leaves are poisonous to certain animals, as calves, while its berries intoxicate birds. Dr. Morris in his inaugural dissertation at Philadelphia in 1802, mentions that he destroyed kittens, &c. with its distilled water. Mr. Proctor detected the hydrocyanic acid in its bark.||

Prunus nigra. (Black cherry tree.) Its bark, infused in cider, proved poisonous to several persons in this state some years since.

Prunus caroliniana. (Wild orange.) Elliot remarks that its leaves are very poisonous, and frequently in the spring of the year destroy cattle that are tempted to browse freely on them.¶

* Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 2. *Prunus lauro-cerasus*. It is of no use to quote the volume and page of Lacon, as the editions are so numerous. It is No. 576 in the edition I have used.

† Christison on Poisons, p. 685.

‡ Halford's Essays, p. 158. I cannot but express my surprise that Dr. Williams (Manual, p. 13) should say that "Donnellan innocently suffered for the death of Boughton." His *innocence* is out of the question.

§ It is now generally conceded, I believe, that the *Laurus* genus contains no prussic acid. Hancock, London Medical Gazette. Burnett's Medical Botany. If there are any poets among my readers, I congratulate them on this.

|| Barton's Materia Medica, part 1, p. 11; part 2, p. 22. Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6, p. 11.

¶ Elliot's Botany, vol. 1, p. 540. North American Archives, vol. 2, p. 31.

Amygdalus communis. (Bitter almonds.) These, when pounded and taken in sufficient quantity, prove highly deleterious, as has been proved by numerous experimenters.

The essential oil of bitter almonds acts violently. One drop applied to the tongue of a cat, instantly excited convulsions, to which loss of motion and insensibility succeeded, the respiration became hurried, and death followed at the end of five minutes. So also when two drops were injected into the rectum. While performing these experiments, Mr. Brodie touched his tongue with a probe that had been dipped into the oil. He instantly experienced an uneasy sensation in the epigastric region, and a weakness of the limbs. The application of the oil to the cellular texture, was equally, but not instantaneously, destructive.*

Two cases are said to have occurred at Montpelier, of children poisoned by the use of bitter almonds. In one, the person had eaten them after they had been heated in a copper vessel; and in the other, the child had been made to drink the milk, as a remedy against worms.†

Mertzdorff relates of an hypochondriac aged forty-eight years, who swallowed two drachms of the oil of bitter almonds. In a few minutes his servant, whom he called to his bedside, observed that his features became spasmodically contracted, and his eyes fixed. Insensibility soon followed, with stertorous breathing and the breath smelling strongly of bitter almonds. Death followed in thirty minutes from taking the oil. The body was examined in 29 hours afterwards, and although the temperature had never exceeded 40° F., putre-

* Brodie's experiments on vegetable poisons, in Philosophical Transactions. According to Robiquet, the essential oil of almonds does not, like common essential oils, exist ready formed in the almond, but is only produced when the almond pulp comes in contact with water. It contains hydrocyanic acid in the proportion of from 8 to 14 per cent.

This substance has peculiarly occupied the attention of chemists. Vogel and Robiquet. Brande's Journal, vol. 13, p. 404; vol. 15, p. 155. Annals of Philosophy, vol. 11, p. 426.

Wohler and Liebig, London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, vol. 3, p. 389; vol. 4, p. 70. Silliman's Journal, vol. 26, p. 262. Robiquet, North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 10, p. 430. Goppert, Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 35, p. 455.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 11, p. 92. A probable case of death from eating bitter almonds, is given by Mr. Kennedy, in Ibid. vol. 57, p. 150.

faction was far advanced. The body was inflated with gas and the skin covered with bluish green stains. Pure blood flowed from the mouth and nose, and the whole body had the odour of almonds. The jaws were firmly fixed. The stomach and intestines were red, and checkered with bloody streaks, and in the former were six ounces of a brownish and highly odorous fluid. The liver, spleen and kidneys were gorged with violet coloured fluid blood. The gall bladder contained a violet coloured bile, and all the muscles had a similar tint. The lungs and heart were natural, but the latter was empty. The brain was every where tinged with the same sort of blood.*

Amygdalus persica. The kernels of the peach are very often distilled for the purpose of impregnating *eau de noyau*, and if too strongly charged with the oil, it must prove noxious. The late Duke Charles of Lorraine nearly lost his life by swallowing a small quantity of this liquor,† and fatal cases are said to have lately occurred in England from the same cause.

Two fatal cases of poisoning with the peach blossom are quoted from Coullon. The symptoms were violent purging, convulsions and stupor. These are rather the symptoms of a narcotico-acrid.‡

An oil is obtained by distilling its leaves or shoots.

Sorbus aucuparia. Mr. Grassmann of St. Petersburg, has ascertained that the flowers and bark contain more or less of the peculiar essential oil, which is procured from all the above vegetables.§

Carbazotic acid. This substance, procured by the action of nitric acid on indigo, is deemed a narcotic poison from the result of experiments on animals, by Professor Rapp of Tübingen. Its solution in doses of from ten to thirty grains, destroyed them rapidly with convulsions and insensibility. No inflammation was seen after death, but many of the textures,

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 22, p. 232. A case of suicide with the oil occurred in England in December, 1831.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 4, p. 15.

‡ Christison, p. 687. § Ibid. p. 688.

as the lungs, conjunctiva, cellular tissue, &c. were dyed of a yellow colour.*

Nitrogen, is classified by Orfila among the narcotic poisons. Animals when plunged into it, experience a difficulty of respiration, which gradually becomes more rapid and weaker, but without any lesion of the nervous functions. Life is however readily restored by exposure to the atmosphere.

In Mr. Broughton's experiments on animals, death followed almost instantaneously from immersion into it. The right ventricle was distended with black blood, and the vessels of the brain, pleura and lungs were collapsed.

Carbonic oxide. This forms a part, as we have already stated, of the deleterious gases arising from burning charcoal. There are, however, one or two facts on record of its influence when prepared in the laboratory.

Sir Humphrey Davy inspired it, in a state of mixture, with about one-fourth of common air. The effect was a temporary loss of sensation, which was succeeded by giddiness, sickness, acute pains in different parts of the body, and extreme debility. Some days elapsed before he entirely recovered.†

Mr. Witter of Dublin, desirous of fully ascertaining the effects of carbonic oxide, when freely inhaled, took three or four full inspirations of it. The consequence was an inconceivably sudden deprivation of sense and volition. He fell supine and motionless on the floor, and continued in a state of total insensibility for almost half an hour, and apparently lifeless, as pulsation was nearly extinct. Various restorative means were used without success, but on the introduction of oxygen gas into the lungs, he recovered with convulsive agitation, excessive headache, and quick irregular pulsation; and for some time after mental recovery, total blindness, extreme sickness and vertigo were experienced. An unconquerable propensity to sleep succeeded, after which he gradually recovered.‡

* Christison, p. 690. Professor Hunefeld would seem to deny its poisonous qualities. It did not, with him, prove noxious. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 460.)

† Davy's Elements of Chemical Philosophy, p. 172, American edition.

‡ Eclectic Repertory, vol. 5, p. 540.

The following curious fact has also been considered as illustrative of the effects of the carbonic oxide. I quote it for its singularity, although I am not satisfied but that other causes may have aided in producing the disease.

"The workmen of a cotton manufactory at Argues, near Dieppe, were attacked with nausea, vertigo and convulsions, which so much affected their imaginations that they thought they saw spectres and other fantastic objects flying at them, and seizing them by the throat. Mr. Nicolle, an apothecary at Dieppe, published a memoir on this disease, and he attributes it to the gaseous oxide of carbon, resulting from the decomposition of the oil, by the heat of a cast iron stove, on which they were in the habit of placing their vessels of that fluid. This gaseous product being lighter than the atmosphere, would ascend, and in this way he accounts for the fact, that the persons in the upper stories of the manufactory, were first affected, while those on the ground floor were generally preserved from it."*

Carburetted hydrogen. Sir Humphrey, in attempting to breathe a mixture of air and carburetted hydrogen, was attacked with giddiness, headache and weakness of the limbs. When he inspired it pure, the first attempt caused numbness in the muscles of the chest, the second induced an overpowering sense of oppression in the breast, and insensibility to external objects; while the third seemed to remove all sensation, and the mouth piece dropped out of his hand. On again becoming sensible, which happened in less than a minute, he continued to suffer for some time from a feeling of impending suffocation, extreme exhaustion and great feebleness of the pulse.† In Mr. Broughton's experiments with this gas on animals, the effects were extremely rapid, causing one or two gasps, stupor and death. On dissection, black blood was found in the right ventricle, while the vessels of the brain were nearly empty and the lungs collapsed.‡

Not long since, at Paris, in consequence of a leak in a pipe that carried the *gas lights*, several individuals were attacked

* Silliman's Journal, vol. 6, p. 199.

† Christison, p. 703, from Davy's Researches.

‡ Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 7, p. 14.

during the night with stupor, and if one had not been awakened by the smell and roused the rest, probably all would have perished. One person was comatose and occasionally convulsed, with froth issuing from his mouth, vomiting, stertorous breathing and dilated pupils. Bleeding relieved him somewhat, but he died in six hours from the time of the alarm. On dissection, the vessels of the brain were found much gorged, the blood in the heart coagulated, one of the lungs congested, and its bronchial tube blocked up by a kidney bean.* The cause of his death is therefore doubtful, but there can be no doubt that an atmosphere of it in a close room and at night, must be deleterious.

Nitrous oxide gas. Occasionally this gas has proved injurious to persons breathing it, and there is every probability of its being hurtful to such as have weak lungs. Chemists are hence unwilling to make it the subject of exhibition at the present day.

Cyanogen gas. Coullon found this to be very poisonous to the smaller animals, and the symptoms were coma, and more rarely convulsions. Huncfeld confirms these results. In the rabbit, slight convulsions, dilated pupils and coma followed, with death in five or six minutes. Drs. Turner and Christison also found it very noxious to vegetables.†

Oxygen gas. When breathed in a state of purity, Mr. Broughton found that animals lived longer in it than in an equal quantity of atmospheric air; but if the experiment was continued for any length of time, hurried respiration and panting came on, then debility, slow inspirations, and insensibility. Examined in this state, the diaphragm was still, but the heart in action and the peristaltic motion of the viscera maintained. The blood both in the veins and arteries, was of a bright scarlet colour. From these experiments Mr. Broughton is induced to rank oxygen among the sedative poisons.‡

Hydrogen gas. It is doubted by many whether this should be deemed a poison. Sparrows and kittens immersed in an atmosphere of it, however, died in half a minute, and Mr.

* *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 3, p. 457. Christison, p. 504.

† Christison, p. 715.

‡ Brande's Journal, *ut antea*.

Broughton found the right ventricle distended with black blood, and the brain and lungs collapsed. Cardone's experiments on himself would also seem to render its dangerous nature probable.*

* Brande's Journal, vol. 20, p. 394.

CHAPTER XXI.

NARCOTICO-ACRID POISONS.

Atropa belladonna—effects; atropine. *Datura stramonium*, and other species—effects. *Nicotiana tabacum*—effects; juice; oil. *Conium maculatum*. *Cicuta virosa*, *maculata*. *Oenanthe crocata*. *Cithusa cynapium*. *Chærophyllum sylvestre*. *Sium latifolium*. *Aconitum napellus*, and other species. *Helleborus niger*. *Veratrum album*, and other species. *Colchicum autumnale*. *Digitalis purpurea*. *Scilla maritima*. *Ipecacuanha*. *Ruta graveolens*. *Anagallis arvensis*. *Aristolochia clematidis*. *Nerium oleander*. *Cerbera tanghin*, and other species. *Apocynum*. *Aselepias*. *Cynanchum*. *Cissus*. *Mercurialis perennis*. Treatment.—*Brucea antidysenterica*. *Strychnos nux-vomica* — effects — appearances on dissection; strychnine — tests. *Strychnos Ignatii*—Tieuté. *Upas antiar*. *Ticunas*. *Woonara*. *Curare*. *Camphor*. *Cocculus indicus*; *picrotoxine*. *Coriaria myrtifolia*. Treatment.—Poisonous mushrooms—symptoms—appearances on dissection—treatment. *Ergot*. *Spurred maize*. *Diseased wheat*. *Darnel*. *Lathyrus cicera*. *Ervum ervilia*. *Cytisus laburnum*. *Alcohol*—symptoms—appearances on dissection—treatment. *Sulphuric ether*. *Nitric ether*. *Empyreumatic oils*; *Dippel's oil*; *oil of tar*. *Creosote*. *Cyanuret of iodine*—of bromine—of potassium. *Unarranged vegetable poisons*. *Compound poisoning*.

“NARCOTICO-ACRID poisons include those which possess a double action, the one local and irritating, like that of the irritants; the other remote, and consisting of an impression on the nervous system. Sometimes they cause narcotism, which is generally of a comatose nature, often attended with delirium; but in one very singular groupe, there is neither insensibility nor delirium, but merely violent spasms. At other times, they excite inflammation where they are applied. This effect, however, is by no means constant. Those which inflame the tissues where they are applied, rarely occasion death in this manner. Some of them may produce very violent local symptoms, but they generally prove fatal through their operation on the nervous system.”*

Orfila divides this class of poisons into six groupes, which may be stated here, although it must be added that they pass insensibly into each other, and therefore cannot sometimes be well distinguished.

* Christison, p. 717.

1. Those whose principal symptom is delirium, as atropa, datura, stramonium, &c.

2. Those whose principal symptom is tetanus, as nux vomica, strychnine, &c.

3. Those which also excite convulsions, but at the same time cause impaired sensibility and sleep, as cocculus indicus, camphor, upas antiar.

4. Poisonous mushrooms.

5. Poisonous grain.

6. Alcohol, ether, and empyreumatic oils.

The individual substances to be noticed, are the following:

VEGETABLES.		
<i>Solanææ</i> ,	<i>Rutaceæ</i> ,	<i>Menispermaceæ</i> ,
Atropa,	Ruta.	Cocculus.
Datura,	<i>Primulaceæ</i> ,	<i>Coriariæ</i> ,
Nicotiana.	Anagallis.	Coriaria.
<i>Umbelliferæ</i> ,	<i>Aristolochiæ</i> ,	<i>Fungi</i> ,
Conium,	Aristolochia.	Agaricus,
Cicuta,	<i>Apocynææ</i> ,	Sclerotium.
Cœnanthe,	Nerium,	<i>Graminææ</i> ,
Æthusa,	Cerbera,	Lolium.
Chærophylhum,	Apocynum,	<i>Leguminosæ</i> ,
Sium.	Strychnos.	Lathyrus,
<i>Ranunculaceæ</i> ,	<i>Asclepiadææ</i> ,	Ervum,
Aconitum,	Asclepias,	Cytisus
Helleborus.	Cynanchum.	
<i>Melanthaceæ</i> ,	<i>Ampelidææ</i> ,	Alcohol,
Veratrum,	Cissus.	Sulphuric ether,
Colechicum.	<i>Euphorbiaceæ</i> ,	Nitric ether,
<i>Scrophularinææ</i> ,	Mercurialis.	Empyreumatic oils,
Digitalis.	<i>Terebinthaceæ</i> ,	Creosote,
<i>Asphodeleæ</i> ,	Brucea.	Cyanuret of iodine, &c.
Scilla.	<i>Artocarpeæ</i> ,	
<i>Rubiaceæ</i> ,	Antiaris.	
Cephaelis,	<i>Laurinææ</i> ,	
Psychotria.	Laurus.	

Atropa belladonna, L. (Deadly night shade.) The berries of this plant are highly noxious. A detachment of several hundred French soldiers, having halted at a short distance from Pirna, near Dresden, were allured by the inviting appearances of the berries of the atropa, which grew in abundance in the neighborhood. They accordingly eat freely of them, and one hundred and eighty men were thus poisoned, many of whom died before professional assistance could be

rendered, and the rest were long in recovering. The following were the symptoms as related by M. Gaultier de Claubry, the medical officer in attendance. Dilatation and immobility of the pupils, total insensibility of the eye to the presence of external objects, or very confused and indistinct vision, the conjunctiva turgid with purple coloured blood, prominence of the eye, which in some appeared dull and heavy, in others bright and furious; great dryness of the lips, tongue, palate and throat; deglutition difficult, in some cases nearly impossible; nausea, not followed by vomiting; sense of weakness, lypothymia, syncope; inability to stand upright; bending forward of the trunk of the body; continual movement of the hands and fingers; lively delirium, accompanied with a silly laugh; aphonia or inarticulate sounds uttered with difficulty; ineffectual inclination to intestinal evacuation; very gradual return to health and reason, without any recollection of the preceding state.*

In many other cases related by authors, most of the prominent symptoms mentioned above have been noticed.† Delirium of the agreeable kind, and dilated and insensible pupil, are the most invariable symptoms. After these, the most frequent are a dryness of the throat, constant motion of the extremities, and locked jaw.‡ Blindness often remains for some time. In one case where 44 grains of the powdered plant were taken by mistake, it was succeeded, among other symptoms, with extreme redness of the whole external surface exactly resembling that observed in scarlatina. Even the throat was of a deep red, and very painful and heated,

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 201. New England Journal, vol. 4, p. 92.

† Christison, p. 721. Sage saw fourteen children who had eaten of the berries. They could not swallow, and the pupils were immoveable. They became drunk and furious, leaping and running. The one who had taken most, suffered under spasmodic twitchings, and discharged blood by the nose and anus, and vomited bloody and purulent matter. On recovering the power of deglutition, it was found that the whole roof of his mouth, his tonsils, and part of his tongue, were covered with aphthæ. They all survived, but on going to school four days thereafter, some saw red, others not at all, and none were able to articulate a sound. Of this they gradually recovered. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 9, p. 380.)

‡ Mr. Brumwell, in Medical Observations and Inquiries, vol. 6, p. 222. Mr. Smith of Forres, (Scotland,) London Medical and Physical Journal for April, 1827. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 29, p. 452, from *Journal de Chimie Médicale*. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 26, p. 528. Koestler in Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 1.

and this sensation extended throughout the alimentary canal. Ineffectual attempts were made to evacuate the urine, which was red and bloody. It came away by drops. By soothing and antiphlogistic treatment, this dangerous condition was removed.*

It appears from a case related by Ray, that even the external application of the fresh leaf to the broken skin, is not unattended with danger.† The dilatation of the pupil of the eye from the application of this substance, is well known, and has been extensively applied in modern surgery.

The watery extract of belladonna, when administered to animals, produced vomiting, dilatation of the pupils, delirium, and in general, the same course of symptoms as in man. The stomach was sometimes ulcerated or red, and at other times sound. The lungs and heart are occasionally livid.

The root of this plant is also poisonous. Indeed Dr. Christison states on the authority of Buchner, that it is the most active part of the plant. In one fatal case, where the individual died comatose twelve hours after eating the berries, an examination was made twelve hours after death. Putrefaction had commenced, the abdomen was swollen, the scrotum and penis distended with foetid serum, the skin covered with dark vesicles, and the brain soft. The bloodvessels of the head were gorged, and the blood every where fluid and flowing from the mouth, nose and eyes.‡

Brandes discovered an alkaloid in this plant, which is styled *atropine*, and in which all the active properties reside. The vapour of it was so injurious, producing violent headache, pain in the back, giddiness and nausea, that he was obliged to discontinue his experiments. On tasting a small quantity of the sulphate of atropine, shaking of the limbs and oppression of breathing were induced, and even the vapour of this and the other salts was noxious. Six drops of the hydrate of atropine killed a bird, producing previously dilatation of the

* Jolly, from *Nouvelle Bibliotheque Medicale*, 1828, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 31, p. 225.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 12, p. 134. A case in which all the usual effects of this substance were produced from a plaster composed of the extract and cerate, and applied to the wrist for psoriasis, is given in *ibid.* for April, 1827.

‡ Case by Gmelin, Christison, p. 724.

pupil and spasms, succeeded by stupor. On dissection, the head and lungs were seen gorged with black blood.*

Runge has ascertained that alkaline solutions and lime water so destroy or change the properties of atropine, as to remove its power of dilating the pupil.†

In a fatal case, parts of the plant will undoubtedly be found in the stomach or intestinal canal. These should be examined for atropine, and it has been suggested to boil down the stomach or intestines, and evaporate the aqueous solution. The extract may be applied to the eye to ascertain whether it produces its characteristic symptoms.‡

Datura stramonium, L. (Thorn apple. Jamestown weed.) Its native country doubtful, but naturalized in every part of the United States. (Bigelow.) This plant has extended itself rapidly over various parts of our country, and is certainly one of the most offensive.§ There are numerous cases on record of the poisonous effects of the leaves and seeds of it.

Dr. Barton states, that in 1765, when some of the British troops under Sir John Sinclair were stationed in the vicinity of Elizabethtown, (New-Jersey,) three of the soldiers collected a quantity of the plant, (which they mistook for lamb's quarters, *Chenopodium album*,) and dressed and ate it. One of them became furious, and ran about like a madman. The second was seized with genuine tetanus, and died.||

* Annals of Philosophy, N. S. vol. 1, p. 270. Burnett's Medical Botany. Geiger's experiments on it. London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 1, p. 215. For an analysis of the atropa belladonna by Vauquelin, see Philosophical Magazine, vol. 36, p. 144.

† Brande's Journal, vol. 13, p. 400.

‡ Burnett's Medical Botany.

§ Dr. Barton remarks, that it grows in great abundance about Vincennes, and was introduced there about the year 1785. "The plant," he adds, "is cut down by legal order, for the inhabitants assert that they were never affected with remitting fevers until the datura was introduced among them. The effluvia arising from the leaves, stem and flowers, are supposed to have given origin to the disease." Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, p. 145. This is evidently laying too much on the plant, but its effluvia are certainly noxious.

Mr. Heckewelder, however, the Moravian missionary, in a letter to Dr. Samuel Cooper, says that he once lay in camp below the falls of Ohio, with Gen. Putnam and others for several days. The ground was covered with stramonium in full blossom; its strong odour caused headache, and in some days he and Gen. Putnam had each a fever. The fogs of the river might have caused this, yet as he was accustomed to them and had never been affected, he ascribes it to the scent of the plant. Dr. Cooper's Dissertation on Stramonium, in Caldwell's Medical Theses, vol. 1, p. 132.

|| Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, p. 146.

Dr. Rush saw a child between three and four years old, who had swallowed some of the seeds. A violent fever, delirium, tremors in the limbs, and a general eruption on the skin, were present, accompanied with considerable swelling, itching and inflammation. Repeated emetics and purgatives, however, alleviated the disease, and brought away some of the seeds. Dilatation of the pupils and blindness still remained, but were obviated by a continuance of the previous remedies, and she recovered her health.*

In the Transactions of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Dr. Moses Bartram relates, that he was called to a child suddenly seized with idiocy, without fever. The pulse was natural, tongue clear, and no internal function disturbed except those of the brain. The child appeared very happy, talking, laughing, and in constant motion, yet so weak that it could not stand or walk without tottering. He exhibited an emetic, and the seeds of the thorn apple were rejected, after which the child recovered.†

* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 1, p. 384.

† Other cases are related by *Dr. Fowler*, (Medical Commentaries, vol. 5, p. 161.) Here the face, eyes and abdomen were swelled. The other symptoms were, however, similar to those mentioned in the text. By *Dr. Thomas Young*, (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 15, p. 154.) By *M. Sarlandiere*, (Journal of Foreign Science, vol. 1, p. 463.) A fatal case by *B. Granger*, in a child two and a half years old. Convulsions and locked jaw, with insensibility, were among the latest symptoms. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 16, p. 155.) Another by *Mr. Duffin*. (London Medical Gazette, vol. 15, p. 194.) Several cases are quoted by *Orfila* from various authors. A remarkable case by *Orfila* himself, is given in the London Medical Repository, vol. 13, p. 259, where it produced most of the symptoms of poisoning, but finally was the means of curing an intense and long continued headache. A very interesting historical account of this plant by *Mr. Royston*, is contained in the London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 25 and 26.

American Cases.

By *Dr. Brown*, (New-York Medical Repository, vol. 5, p. 36.) A scarlet efflorescence was here present, and the pupils were dilated.

Two cases by *Dr. De Witt*, (Ibid. vol. 2, p. 27.) In one instance the poison produced pain, and during recovery there were numerous vesications on the skin.

Dr. Beardsley of Ohio, five persons with the usual symptoms. *Dr. Drake's Tables*, note p. 69.

By *Dr. C. D. Meigs*. Here also, in a child, there was a very general efflorescence, (small petechiæ.) (North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 33.)

By *Dr. R. E. Griffith*, symptoms similar; but three days after eating the seeds, and when the patient was relieved from the immediate symptoms, a general eruption resembling measles broke out and continued twelve hours. (American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 5, p. 251.)

By *Dr. Slavens* of Kentucky, a case of attempted poisoning by a parent, first with the seeds and then with the decoction. Great torpor of the bowels ensued from the repeated doses. (Transylvania Journal, vol. 4, p. 172.)

Orfila enumerates the following list of symptoms as produced by this plant: "Intoxication, delirium, loss of sense, drowsiness, a sort of madness and fury—loss of memory, sometimes transitory, and sometimes permanent—convulsions, paralysis of the limbs, cold sweats, and excessive thirst and tremblings."

Dr. Drake, of Cincinnati, mentions, that it is not uncommon in the western states, to observe hemiplegia, with spasmodic affections of the opposite side, in children who have eaten the seeds or flowers.*

The stramonium was some years since used to a considerable extent in asthma, and there is reason to believe, that in some cases it proved deleterious.†

The tincture and decoction of this substance, produce effects resembling those already described. Half a wine glass-full of the former, after the common symptoms, caused violent convulsions, lock-jaw, and stertorous breathing.‡ The extract used as a suppository and introduced into the rectum, induced many of the symptoms of delirium tremens.§ Even bruising the leaves in a mortar, has caused dilated pupil and irritation of the skin.||

In two fatal cases of children less than three years old, an examination was made. In one, a large quantity of the seeds was found in the intestines; but no mention is made of any marks of irritation in them, or in the stomach. The bladder was distended, and the vessels of the pia mater loaded. In the other, where death followed in 24 hours, the brain was natural—the blood semifluid throughout the body—the stomach

By Dr. Williams of Ohio, a child delirious and deaf from merely chewing, not swallowing the seeds. (*Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences*, vol. 8, p. 165.)

Anonymous cases in *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 9, p. 10.

* Drake's Tables, Note, p. 69.

† See on this point, Dr. Bree's Letter on Stramonium, in *New-England Journal*, vol. 1, p. 411.

‡ Dr. Williams, in *New-England Journal*, vol. 12, p. 253. Dr. Swaine, in *Edinburgh Physical and Literary Essays*, vol. 2, p. 272. Mr. Mash, in *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 8, p. 605.

§ *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 6, p. 493.

|| Dr. Abel, in *Medical Recorder*, vol. 14, p. 203. Very dangerous results have also been caused, by applying stramonium ointment to an abraded surface. (*North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 11, p. 483, from *Journal de Chimie Méd.*)

and intestines healthy—the bladder distended—the larynx, and œsophagus slight red, and the rima glottidis thickened and very turgid.*

The stomach of animals poisoned with the watery extract, by introduction into that organ, was found inflamed, and blood was extravasated between the mucous coat and the one subjacent to it. The lungs were of a deep red, and distended with black and fluid blood.†

Brandes has discovered an alkaline principle in this plant, called *daturine*. It is highly poisonous. One eighth of a grain was enough to poison a sparrow in three hours. It produces when placed on the eye, long continued dilatation of the pupil.‡ Dr. Simes gave four grains of muriate of daturine to a cat, at 10 P. M. It produced nausea, and contractions of the muscles of the leg and neck, and the animal was found dead the next morning.§

The *Datura metel*, L. *ferox*, L. and *tatula*, L. are equally poisonous. The seeds of the *datura metel* are used in Asia for their soporific and intoxicating qualities, and are made the instrument of unbounded libertinism.||

The *Datura arborea*, L., is another species, that produces similar effects on the human system. Dr. Renton, of Madeira, relates several cases occurring in that island, from eating the seeds.¶

Nicotiana tabacum, L. (Tobacco.) It is not necessary to multiply cases proving the poisonous nature of this substance when taken *internally*. The death of Santeuil, a French poet, was caused by an inconsiderate person emptying the contents of a snuff-box into his wine, which, as soon as he had swallowed, excited violent vomiting and excessive pain, and he

* Mr. Granger, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 16, p. 155. Mr. Duffin, in London Medical Gazette, vol. 15, p. 194.

† Orfila's Toxicology.

‡ Brande's Journal, vol. 11, p. 205. Lancet, N. S. vol. 14, p. 117.

§ Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 5, p. 118. Dr. Morries found the empyreumatic oil of stramonium, poisonous to animals. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 382.)

¶ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 97, and Mr. Royston's paper already quoted.

¶ Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. 3, p. 475.

died in fourteen hours.* So also when the infusion or the smoke is administered in large quantities, as by a glyster, convulsions, sickness, and vomiting supervene, and death often is the result.†

A female in London was persuaded by an empiric to use the infusion as a cure for worms. Soon after its exhibition as an enema, she was seized with violent convulsions, and died in fifteen minutes.‡ Another in Hamburgh took an enema, consisting of an ounce of tobacco, boiled in water, for fifteen minutes. In two minutes thereafter, she was seized with vomiting, violent convulsions, and stertorous breathing. Death ensued in three hours after taking it.§

Externally, the effects are no less striking. A man and his wife fomented their bodies with a watery infusion of tobacco, in order to remove the itch. Giddiness, headache, retching and vomiting, with diarrhœa soon supervened. Thirst accompanied these, as also spasms, and the debility and oppression were great. They were, however, gradually relieved by judicious treatment.|| A lineament, prepared with the powder of tobacco and butter, applied to the heads of children, labouring under tinea, caused vertigoes, violent vomitings and faintings, extreme perspiration and a staggering walk.¶

In a case where the expressed juice of tobacco, applied to the head of a boy for tinea capitis, proved fatal in three hours, the brain and viscera were found healthy, but the blood in the heart was fluid, with the exception of a coagulum in the right ventricle.** In the case related by Dr. Grahl, there was, two

* Orfila's Directions, p. 107. An individual swallowed two ounces of manufactured tobacco with an intention to destroy himself. It produced dilated and insensible pupils; cold extremities; scarcely perceptible pulse; cold, clammy sweats; stertorous breathing; spasms; jaws set. He was relieved by the stomach syringe and sinapisms. Dr. Guy Wright, in *Ohio Medical Repository*, vol. 1, p. 28.

† See some remarks on this point in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 9, p. 159. A case where the smoking of tobacco produced most of the symptoms of apoplexy, as stertor, insensibility of the pupil, deep livid countenance, and spasmodic contraction, is given in the same work, vol. 12, p. 11.

‡ *North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 6, p. 187.

§ Case by Dr. Grahl, (from Hufeland's *Journal*.) *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 36, p. 227. See also Burnett's *Medical Botany*, vol. 1.

|| *Medical Commentaries*, vol. 11, p. 327.

¶ Orfila's *Toxicology*, vol. 2, p. 214.

** Case by Mr. Weston, from *London Medical and Physical Journal*, quoted in *Coxe's Medical Museum*, vol. 3, appendix, p. 177.

days after death, great lividity of the back, paleness of the lips, and flexibility of the joints. The omentum very red, without gorging of its vessels; the small and great intestines, both outside and inside, gorged and red, and in some parts of the mucous membrane, extravasated bloody patches. The other abdominal viscera natural, but their vessels very empty of blood. The stomach natural, the lungs pale red, the heart empty of blood, and the brain very natural.*

Several experimenters have examined the effects of tobacco on animals. Fontana found that the insertion of the oil into wounds, induced temporary paralysis, but not death.† Brodie used both the infusion and the oil. The former, when injected into the rectum of an animal, produced faintness and early insensibility and death. It stopped the circulation of the heart, and caused syncope. The latter excited violent convulsions, frequent respiration, and death, occasioning this termination by destroying the functions of the brain.‡

The experiments of Orfila with snuff, produced results generally similar to those we have now related, and they also show, that the extract of the *nicotiana rustica* acts in the same manner as tobacco, but is less active.

Vauquelin some years since, analyzed tobacco, and found in it an acrid principle, which was styled *Nicotine*. Subsequent investigations by Posselt and Reimarus, have shown that this substance is the essential oil of tobacco, which is solid at ordinary temperatures, and they succeeded in obtaining another principle, which they deem the true nicotine. This is volatile, extremely acrid, and capable of forming salts.§ Half a grain of the hydrochlorate produced violent nervous symptoms, succeeded by insensibility for three hours, in an animal.||

Conium maculatum, L. (Hemlock.) Raving madness and epileptic fits occurred to Mr. Ray, in the case of a woman

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 36, p. 227.

† Medical Commentaries, vol. 12, p. 110. Philosophical Transactions, vol. 70, p. 163. See also Dr. Morries' experiments in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 383.

‡ Eclectic Repertory, vol. 2, p. 274.

§ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 379. Christison, p. 728. See also a Memoir on Tobacco, by Dr. Conwell, in Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 1, p. 104.

|| Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 5, p. 201.

who had eaten the roots of this plant.* Vertigo, convulsions, coma and death, were the result to two soldiers at Waltham Abbey, in Essex, who had boiled it with their bacon for dinner.†

Some soldiers partook of broth, into which hemlock had been put. All of them were shortly after seized with pains in the head and throat, and felt as if drunk; but the one who had eaten the most had lain down and gone to sleep. When first noticed, he was insensible, respiring with great difficulty; his pulse small and slow, even to thirty pulsations in the minute; the extremities were cold, and the face bluish, and distended with blood. An emetic was given without effect. He complained of being cold, but shortly after lost again the use of speech and sense, and died in three hours after taking the poison. On dissection, there were some red spots seen round the pylorus; the intestines were healthy, but all the vessels of the brain were gorged with blood, and on opening the cranium, there flowed out blood sufficient to fill twice an ordinary chamber-pot.‡

Convulsions, furious delirium, and swellings of the face, appear thus to be among the leading symptoms from the use of this poison.

The juice, and the extract when properly prepared, produce similar effects on animals. Orfila has, however, shown that the extract usually sold in the shops is inefficient and weak.§

In a case examined by Drs. Christison and Coindet, where a hypochondriacal old woman took two ounces of a strong infusion of hemlock in whiskey, early in the morning fasting, and where death followed in an hour after, being comatose and slightly convulsed, the vessels of the head were not turgid, but the blood was everywhere fluid.||

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. 19, p. 634.

† Ibid, vol. 43, p. 18. Case by Dr. Watson.

‡ Case by M. Haaf, quoted by Orfila. Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 242.

§ A drachm of the extract prepared by himself was sufficient to poison a dog, whereas an ounce and even ten drachms from several of the shops in Paris, produced no effect whatever. (Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 1. p. 104)

|| Christison, p. 735.

Brandes has obtained a peculiar alkaloid from the juice of the leaves of this plant, which is variously called *conine*, *conia*, or *coniin*. Half a grain will kill a rabbit with tetanic symptoms resembling those produced by strychnine.* Geiger, in further experiments, ascertained that the seeds, flowers, or fresh stems, yielded a volatile alkali, analogous to that in tobacco. *The dry plant is almost destitute of it.* Coniin, as obtained by Geiger, is irritating to the eyes, causes giddiness, and indeed is so highly poisonous, that one or two grains are sufficient to kill the largest animal.†

Cicuta virosa, L. or *aquatica*. (Water hemlock.) This is a more violent poison than the preceding.

The following train of symptoms has been noticed: Dazzling, obscurity of the sight, vertigo, headache, often acute and excruciating, a vacillating walk, anxiety of the præcordia, cardialgia, dryness of the throat, ardent thirst, eructatio, vomiting of greenish matter, frequent and interrupted respiration, tetanic contractions of the jaws, sometimes followed by lethargy, with coldness of the extremities; at other times with a furious delirium, or attacks resembling epilepsy. In one or two cases, a swelling of the face has been noticed. In a case where death followed, hiccup and fruitless efforts to vomit were present, with tetanic convulsions. The abdomen and face swelled after death, and there flowed a quantity of green froth from the mouth.‡

The experiments of Wepfer prove how deadly this plant is to animals, and Linnæus, in his *Tour to Lapland*, has illustrated it in an impressive manner. At Tornea, hundreds of cattle were annually destroyed in the spring, without any assignable cause. The poison was said to be of so pestilential a nature, that though the animals were flayed before they were cold, yet wherever their blood came in contact with the human body, it caused gangrenous spots and sores. Some,

* Brande's Journal, N. S., vol. 3, p. 227. Tests of this substance have been proposed by Giseke. (North-American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 421.) For Battley's and Bird's experiments on conium maculatum, see American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 9, p. 506, and vol. 12, p. 260.

† British Association report for 1831-32, p. 509. London Medical Quarterly Review, vol. 1, p. 215. Researches on Conium, by Foderé. (Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 23, p. 218.) Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 7, p. 241.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 248, collected from Wepfer, Guersent, &c.

indeed, had lost their lives in this way. On examining the meadow into which they were first turned out to grass, he found in it a bog or marsh, in which the *Cicuta aquatica* grew in great abundance, and had evidently been plentifully cropped by the cattle in feeding.*

In three fatal cases, the appearances on dissection were as follows: bluish red spots on the skin, pupils dilated, vessels of the conjunctiva gorged, lungs sound, but of a bluish red colour, and gorged with blood, as were also the vessels of the pleura. Blood in the right side of the heart. Brown spots on the mucous membrane of the stomach and small intestines, and these organs distended with gas. Epiglottis red, and much mucus in the trachea, and the vessels of the brain highly injected, as if they had died of apoplexy.†

Cicuta maculata, L. (Snake weed. American hemlock, called wild carrot. Wild parsnip root. Mock eel root, in Virginia.) A native of this country. We have, unfortunately, several cases on record of death produced by the root of this plant,‡ and from an examination of these, the following appear as the effects: Vomiting, pain in the bowels, tenesmus, and occasionally purging, convulsions, dilatation of the pupils, feeble pulse, and frothing at the mouth and nose, mixed with blood. When not convulsed, the patients lay in a deep sleep; the countenance is pale, and the extremities are cold. Several observers have noticed an astonishing mobility of the eyeballs and eyelashes, although the pupils are firmly and

* Linnæus' Tour in Lapland, London edition, vol. 1, p. 245. See also vol. 2, p. 136, 212. Cows eat it early in the spring, when its growth has just commenced, but as the summer advances, its scent becomes stronger, and warns them to avoid it. It is remarkable, however, that goats devour it with impunity. (London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 12, p. 368.)

† Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 5, p. 505, from Journal Complementary, February, 1824.

‡ New-York Medical Repository, vol. 17, p. 303, two cases by Dr. Ely, of Dutchess county, in this state. New-England Journal, vol. 7, p. 219, case by Dr. Hazeltine, of Massachusetts. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 334, by Dr. Stockbridge. Dr. Muhlenberg states in a letter, that it had killed several at Harmony, (Pennsylvania,) who had eaten it instead of angelica. Medical Repository, *ut antea*. Three cases by Dr. Greenway of Virginia, under the name of *Cicuta venenosa*, in the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 3, p. 234. A case by Dr. G. W. Wright, Ohio Medical Repository, vol. 1, p. 51. Cases in Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 9, p. 12, and vol. 10, p. 107. See also Bigelow's Medical Botany, vol. 1, p. 129. There is scarcely a spring, that fatal cases from eating it through mistake are not mentioned in our newspapers.

widely dilated. Death follows rapidly, and particularly in children; in two cases, within an hour after eating it.

In some instances, it kills without producing pain or convulsions. The Indians, when tired of life, are said to poison themselves with its roots.*

One dissection has been made by Dr. Hazletine. The limbs were more flexible than is usual. The stomach was inflated, and contained about three gills of a mucous, greenish fluid, on the surface of which was seen a part of the masticated root. There were no appearances of inflammation.

Enanthe crocata, L. (Hemlock dropwort. Dead tongue.) Several cases are on record of the poisonous effects of this plant. A citizen of the Hague ate, with one of his friends, some of its roots. In a short time, they both felt a great heat in the stomach, which was followed by alienation of mind, vertigo, cardialgia, nausea and diarrhæa. One of them had violent convulsions, the other bled at the nose; and the one who had eaten the most, died at the end of two hours, and the other at the end of three.†

Eleven French prisoners, walking about the town of Pembroke, gathered and ate by mistake a small quantity of this plant with bread and butter. One of them was shortly after seized with convulsions, and died in spite of every effort to save him. The others were attacked in a similar manner, of whom one died, and the others were relieved by forcing down an emetic. None experienced any heat at the stomach.‡

M. Charles visited a family who had eaten the roots of the cœnanthe. A sensation of burning was present in the stomach, and small rose-coloured spots appeared successively in different parts of the body. The abdomen, in one case, was greatly swollen. Several soldiers are also said to have died from eating them. The previous symptoms were nausea, vertigo, vomiting, and violent convulsions. Death ensued in less than an hour after using the poison. On dissection, the lungs were

* Barton's essay towards a Materia Medica. Part 1, p. 17.

† Stalpart, vol. 1, p. 192. Our author quotes cases from Smetius, Roeslerus and Timæus, in which the root produced vertigo and violent delirium, and in some instances difficult respiration and hiccup.

‡ Howell, in Phil. Transactions, vol. 44, p. 227, with the remarks of Mr. Watson.

found distended, and their vessels full of black and dissolved blood; the bronchiæ, trachea and mouth contained a frothy and whitish fluid; the stomach was contracted and inflamed in its extremity and lesser curvature—its coats were thickened; the intestines were puffed up, and their vessels injected. The derangements were precisely similar in all the cases; and the body of one, though preserved four days, exhibited no sign of putrefaction.*

“This seems (says Dr. Christison) to be the most energetic of the umbelliferous vegetables. In none of the fatal cases, was life prolonged beyond three hours and a half; and in several, death took place within an hour. One man was killed by a single spoonful of the juice of the root.”

Ænanthe fistulosa, L. has also frequently proved poisonous.

Æthusa cynapium, L. (Common fool's parsley.) This plant has been the cause of injury, from its being mistaken for parsley. Orfila gives the following as distinctive characters:—
1. The leaves of the fool's parsley are of a blackish-green on the upper side, and shining. 2. They have no smell without being bruised, but they give out a nauseous smell when rubbed between the fingers; parsley, on the contrary, presents an agreeable odour. 3. Its root is smaller than that of parsley, and dies every year in autumn. Its effects are, heat in the throat, pain, cramps in the stomach, swelling of the body and difficult respiration, drowsiness and starting: delirium is occasionally present. The symptoms are more violent if vomiting does not occur.†

Riviere examined a body poisoned by it. The tongue was black; a brownish serosity was found in the stomach, and the liver was hard, and of a yellow colour.

* Duval, quoted by Orfila, Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 67. Additional cases are related by Dr. Vaughan, in Philosophical Transactions, vol. 20, p. 84; by Dr. Watson, *ibid.* vol. 50, p. 356, and by Dr. Pulteney, *ibid.* vol. 62, p. 469. By Dr. Graves, Medical Facts and Observations, vol. 7, p. 308. By Drs. Bry and Reveille-Parise, (Journal Général) London Medical Repository, vol. 19, p. 434. In several of these, death followed in three or four hours. By Mr. Froyssell, Lancet, N. S. vol. 13, p. 860. By Mr. Houlston, in his Observations on Poisons, p. 40.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 250. Cases by Mr. Stevenson, in London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 14, p. 425. Dr. Buckhave, in Medical Commentaries, vol. 14, p. 37. Mr. Lowe, in Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 1.

Dr. Ficus, of Dresden, has discovered an alkaloid in this plant, which is called *cynapia*, and by others *cynapin*.*

Charophyllum sylvestre, L. (Wild chervil.) The root of this plant has produced delirium, profound sleep, numbness and suffocation.

Sium latifolium, L. (Procumbent water parsnip,) a native of the United States. This has also caused violent delirium, on eating the root in August; before that, it is not deemed noxious. Dangerous mistakes have been made from mistaking it for water-cresses, among which it grows. When not in flower, they are much alike. The leaves of the parsnip are toothed at their edges; those of the other, undulated.†

The two following plants belong to the natural order of the *Ranunculaceæ*, which are usually acrid in their properties; but Dr. Christison observes that they possess distinctly the characters of the Narcotico-acrids, and I therefore place them in this class.

Aconitum napellus, L. (Monkshood, wolfsbane, aconite.) Mr. Bacon, a surgeon, was called to visit a man named John Crumpler, who, at 8 P. M. had eaten some sallad in which, by mistake, a certain quantity of aconite had been put. The patient immediately felt a burning heat in the tongue and gums, and an irritation in the cheek. This tingling sensation extended over the whole body, accompanied with twitchings. When Mr. Bacon saw him, his eyes and teeth were fixed; his hands, feet and forehead cold, and covered with a cold sweat. No pulse could be perceived, and his breath was so short as scarcely to be distinguishable. Oil and carduus tea were immediately administered, which induced vomiting, but the symptoms still remained aggravated. Ammonia was now given, when vomiting again supervened, accompanied with purging. His symptoms now improved, although the pulse was still interrupted and irregular; and he gradually recovered.‡

* Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 2, p. 392. British Association Report for 1831-2, p. 510.

† Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 6, p. 427.

‡ Philosophical Transactions, vol. 38, p. 287. A fatal case, where convulsions followed the early symptoms, and where the aconite was mistaken for horse-radish, is given by Dr. G. Smith, Forensic Medicine, p. 169, 2d edition.

Mathiolus states, that the root of this plant was administered to four highwaymen. Two of them, after having experienced the most violent pains, were saved by appropriate means; the other two died, one of whom, a few hours after the administration, became an idiot; the face was covered with cold sweat; asphyxia, spasms, and syncope took place; he passed involuntary stools, vomited bilious and livid matter; his body swelled, and he died apoplectic.

Willis relates that a man died mad, within a very short time after eating some sallad in which there were some of the fresh leaves of the *Aconitum napellus*. Even its juice introduced into a small wound made into the thumb, has been known to give rise to pains in the fingers and arms, cardialgia, lipothymia, agitation, and finally copious suppuration, and gangrene.*

A family near Lille were poisoned by this plant, in consequence of a tincture of its roots being mistaken for that of a species of lovage. The usual symptoms soon followed, with swelling of the face, vomiting and purging. Two individuals died, and the only appearance of note was great redness of the inner membrane of the stomach and small intestines.† In some other cases observed by Pallas, the throat and rectum were also red; the lungs dense, dark and gorged; and the cerebral vessels turgid.‡

Effect on animals. Mr. Brodie injected an ounce of the juice of the leaves of aconite into the rectum of a cat. He soon voided it, and then stood motionless for some minutes. At the end of nine minutes, he retched and vomited, and then attempted to walk, but faltered and fell at every step, as if from giddiness. At the end of thirteen minutes, he lay motionless, except some slight convulsive actions of the limbs; and in forty-seven minutes from the time of the injection, he was dead.§ Orfila gave the freshly prepared watery extract

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 56. Mr. Brodie states, that if a small quantity of the leaf of aconite be chewed, it occasions a remarkable sense of numbness of the lips and gums, which does not subside for two or three hours.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 28, p. 452. from *Journal de Chimie Médicale*.

‡ Christison, p. 741.

§ Brodie's Observations and Experiments on the different modes in which death is produced by certain vegetable poisons, from Philosophical Transactions of 1811, in Eclectic Repertory, vol. 2, p. 273.

to dogs, with similar effects. The posterior extremities were entirely paralyzed, and great pain seemed to be present. When, however, he used the extract purchased in the apothecaries' shops, it was slow in its operation, and required large doses to produce its usual effects.* The root of the plant also acts as a similar, and indeed more violent, poison to animals. Wepfer destroyed a wolf with two drachms of it; and Bonetus, a young dog with half a drachm.

When applied to the cellular texture of animals, by Brodie and Orfila, the symptoms were very similar to those previously described. On dissection, the stomach and brain were generally seen healthy, although in a few cases the mucous membrane of the former was slightly inflamed. In another instance, the rectum exhibited a few reddish spots.

The *Aconitum cammarum*, Jacq., is said to be no less deleterious than the napellus, and cases of death from its use are related by Mathiolus and Bonetus. In an instance mentioned by the former, vertigo and violent commotion of the brain preceded a general swelling of the body; the countenance became livid, and the patient died in horrible convulsions.

The *Aconitum anthora* L. and *Aconitum lycoctonum*, L. (Wolfsbane,) are also deemed poisonous.†

The *Aconitum Ferox*, Wall. however, a native of the mountain ranges of Northern India, would seem to excel all the other species in virulence. Dr. Wallich says it is the *Vishavish* or *Bish* of the natives, and he observes, "that this dreadful root is equally poisonous when taken into the stomach or applied to wounds. It is in universal use for poison-

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 52. This corresponds with the following fact, mentioned in a late journal. Ten patients, threatened with phthisis, were received into the hospital at Pavia, and the extract of aconite was prescribed for them. They took this to the amount of *half a drachm at a dose*, without any inconvenience, and indeed with improvement. All the extract, however, prepared in the hospital, being consumed, a fresh quantity was procured from the shop of an apothecary, and administered in similar doses. Mental affections of the most alarming nature rapidly supervened, accompanied with other distressing symptoms. Borda prescribed laudanum as a *contra-stimulant*, and the patients were gradually restored. (London Medical Repository, vol. 15, p. 540.)

† Linnaeus, however, mentions, that he was informed by the wife of the principal clergyman of Lulea, that at a certain post-house in Lapland, she had seen large quantities of the *aconitum lycoctonum* collected and boiled for the use of the table, like cabbage! She was evidently acquainted with the plant. (Linnaeus' Tour in Lapland, vol. 2, p. 123.)

ing arrows. The Gorkhalese pretend that it is one of their principal securities against invasion from the low countries. In one tank of water destined for the use of a part of the British army, on a halt in pursuit of the retreating Burmese, the water had been poisoned by the *aconitum ferox*, bruised and thrown in by the enemy, before they evacuated the place. Undoubtedly fatal consequences would have ensued, had not Dr. Wallich discovered it.*

The Bish is also used in Northern India for destroying tigers. Arrows poisoned with it are shot at them, and they are soon found dead.

At the request of Dr. Wallich, who deems this substance equal in power to strychnine, Mr. Pereira performed some experiments with the root of the *aconitum ferox*. The same numbness of the lips and tongue was experienced as from the *napellus*, on merely tasting the tincture. The poison was then exhibited to animals, either by the stomach, the cellular tissue, or the blood-vessels. The symptoms produced were difficulty of breathing, convulsions and paralysis of the extremities. Death occurred rapidly, and on dissection, the right side of the heart was seen distended, and the left empty; the lungs of a florid red.†

According to Peschier, the *aconitum napellus* contains a peculiar alkaloid, the *aconitine*, which possesses the poisonous qualities of the plant. His analysis, which at first was doubted, has been confirmed by Brandes and Geiger. It would appear to be highly poisonous. The one fiftieth of a grain dissolved in alcohol, killed a sparrow in a few minutes, and one tenth of a grain destroyed a small bird with the rapidity of lightning.‡

Helleborus Niger, L. (*Melampodium*, black hellebore, Christmas rose.) Morgagni mentions a case, where an individual un-

* History of British India, (in Harper's Family Library,) vol. 3, p. 127. Dr. A. T. Thomson's lectures in London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 292. Wallich, quoted in Journal Royal Institution, vol. 1, p. 366.

† Edinburgh Journal of Natural and Geographical Science, vol. 2, p. 435. For further information on the Indian Bish, I refer to Ainslie's *Materia Indica*, vol. 2, p. 40. Transactions of the Medical Society of Calcutta, vol. 2, p. 289, 410.

‡ Duncan's Supplement, p. 2. Lancet, N. S., vol. 14, p. 118. Turnbull on Aconitine, in Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 26, p. 435.

der cure in the hospital, took about half a drachm of an extract made with water from the roots of this substance. He was seized with pain and vomiting, and died in eight hours. On dissection, the whole digestive canal was found inflamed, and the larger intestines more so than the smaller. There was, however, no gangrene, and the limbs continued flexible for some time after death.*

Two cases of poisoning with this substance have lately been communicated to the *Societe Medicale d'Emulation*, at Paris, by M. Ferrary. A domestic took a decoction of the root in some cider, at the recommendation of an empiric, and his master, from curiosity, swallowed a like dose. In about three quarters of an hour, alarming symptoms were developed, without, however, exciting suspicion of their real cause. Another glass full was taken by the servant, when vomiting, delirium, horrible contortions, accompanied with immediate coldness, supervened, and death at last ensued. The violence of the symptoms was proportioned to the quantity taken. The master died in two hours and a half, and the servant in one hour and three quarters after its ingestion. On dissection sixteen hours afterwards, the appearances in each were found precisely similar, except that in the domestic they were more strongly marked. The lungs were gorged with blood. The mucous membrane of the stomach was considerably inflamed, of a blackish brown colour, and reduced to an almost gangrenous state. The œsophagus and intestines were natural.†

In animals this produces vomiting or attempts to vomit, great debility, vertigo, insensibility and great torpor, and finally death. And this, if the dose be large enough, whether taken internally or applied to a wound. The stomach and intestines, and particularly the rectum, are found inflamed, and in one instance the mucous membrane was ulcerated. Slight congestions have also been noticed in the lungs, and the bladder has been observed red and thickened.‡

* Morgagni, vol. 1, epist. 59, p. 392.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 10, p. 424. As this was a quack remedy, it is possible that some mineral poison may have been mixed with the hellebore.

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 7. London Medical Repository, vol. 10, p. 426.

Helleborus fatidus, L. is also said to have caused the death of a child, who ate its root in the pulp of an apple.*

Helleborus orientalis, Lam. The hellebore of the ancients is also poisonous.†

Chemists have not been able to detect an alkaloid in this plant. According to Fenuelle and Capron the active principle appears to be an oily matter containing an acid.‡

Veratrum album, L. (White hellebore. Indian poke.) The root of this plant has long been distinguished for its poisonous qualities. Etmuller states, that when applied to the abdomen, it produces violent vomiting; and the same phenomenon has been observed by Schroeder, when it was used as a suppository. Internally, it produces spasms, suffocation, loss of voice, and coldness over the body. Vicat relates the case of a family, who took some soup in which the root of white hellebore had been put instead of pepper. Shortly after, they were seized with a general coldness, and their bodies became covered with an icy sweat. Debility and an almost imperceptible pulse succeeded, and they were not relieved until vomiting came on. The root when powdered is a powerful errhine.

In several instances collected by Dr. Christison, burning in the throat, gullet and stomach, followed by nausea, vomiting and dysuria, occurred very early, and these were succeeded by weakness of the limbs, giddiness, blindness and dilated pupils, great faintness, convulsive breathing and small pulse. In a fatal case quoted by Bernt, vomiting ensued, violent and incessant, and followed by death in twelve hours. On dissection, the gullet, stomach and colon were here and there inflamed.§

When administered to dogs, it produced violent vomitings and debility, and when the œsophagus was tied, there was violent straining, dejection, vertigo, and finally death. On dissection, the mucous membrane of the stomach was seen

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 11. Additional cases are related in Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 1.

† A beautiful plate of this from the Flora Græca is given in Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 2, plate 87.

‡ Philosophical Magazine, vol. 60, p. 70. Brande's Journal, vol. 13, p. 150.

§ Christison, p. 746.

red, but not ulcerated. The other parts were natural. On inserting the root in powder into a wound on the thigh of a dog, similar symptoms were produced, accompanied with dilatation of the pupils, and the stomach after death presented the same appearance as in the previous instance.*

Veratrum viride of Aiton and Willdenow, is a native of New-England, and is said to have produced dangerous and even mortal effects. The root is bitter, nauseous and acrid, and burns the mouth and fauces.†

In the *Veratrum album*, in the seeds of the *Veratrum sabadilla*, Retz. and in the root of the *Colchicum autumnale*, L. Pelletier and Caventou have detected an alkaloid which they denominated *veratrine* or *veratria*. It is extremely bitter, and excites even in minute doses, violent vomiting and purging. A few grains destroy the life of animals; and these effects, according to Andral junior, occur also when it is applied to the cellular tissue or thrown into the veins.‡ Within a short time, Courbe is said to have ascertained veratrine to be a compound substance, and a new alkaloid extremely poisonous, and termed *colchicine* is announced by Geiger.§

Colchicum autumnale, L. (Meadow saffron.) This plant acquired considerable celebrity some years since, from its being supposed to be the active ingredient in the *Eau medicinale* of Husson.

Its seeds have proved fatal to several children, in consequence of eating them, and cattle also suffer greatly by them, but only in the *spring*, when the seed vessel is fully matured. The seed, if swallowed, adheres to the coat of the stomach, and produces at the several points of adhesion, spots of inflammation, which occasion the death of the beast.||

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 3.

† New-England Journal, vol. 3, p. 335. Bigelow's Medical Botany, vol. 2, p. 125. In a late essay on the veratrum viride by Dr. Osgood, the idea is advanced that it does not contain veratrine. (American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 16, p. 297.) Dr. Osgood corroborates its noxious effects.

‡ Brande's Journal, vol. 10, p. 171. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 42, p. 156 and 235. There is a good paper on the vegetable alkalies by Dr. Peter, in the Transylvania Journal, vol. 7, p. 157.

§ Lancet, N. S. vol. 14, p. 118. Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6, p. 320.

|| Mr. Want, in the Annals of Philosophy, vol. 4, p. 221, from information communicated to him by Sir Joseph Banks and Mr. Andrew Knight. In the Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. 7, p. 114, it is mentioned that a farmer near Tetbury, lost se-

The following is an instance of its poisonous effects on man. An ounce and a half of the vinous tincture of colchicum was by mistake given to a feeble man aged fifty-six, and labouring under chronic rheumatism. No complaint was made until about an hour after, when retching and acute pains at the stomach came on, and vomiting and purging supervened. This state continued for nearly twenty-four hours, when the purging ceased, but the most distressing nausea continued, with frequent retching. The stools were, during the succeeding night, often involuntary, but not bloody. Excessive thirst came on and continued till death, with severe pains of the stomach and bowels. In the evening, the patient seemed nearly exhausted; delirium appeared; the pulse could scarcely be perceived. He lived, however, through the second night, but died the morning following. On dissection, there was a redness of the stomach observed, but no appearance of inflammation in the bowels.*

In a case that occurred to Mr. Fereday, where two ounces of the wine of colchicum were taken through mistake, vomiting and purging, with violent pain, came on in an hour and a half. These continued, and resisted all means for their suppression, for more than twenty-four hours, and the patient sunk in 47 hours from taking the substance. On dissection, the body, particularly in front, was seen covered with patches of a purple efflorescence. The stomach and bowels were coated with a thick mucus, and a portion of the mucous membrane of the former was red, owing to a slight effusion of blood under it. There was a similar appearance in the peritoneum covering the jejunum. Lungs gorged with black blood, and which was effused under the pleura in spots. The heart was flabby, with black blood on the right side.†

A female took an infusion of colchicum to produce abortion. The symptoms were similar to the cases already related. The miscarriage took place the next day, and she died

ven yearling beasts out of eighteen, by putting them in a pasture where this plant grew in abundance. On opening their bodies the food was found clogged together, in a crude and undigested mass, incapable of passing through the proper ducts. The French call it, among other names, *tue chien*, from its killing dogs.

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 14, p. 262.

† London Medical Gazette, vol. 10, p. 161.

in a few hours after. On dissection, every part was found healthy, except the mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines, and this was highly inflamed.* In a fatal case Dr. A. T. Thomson found that every mucous surface of the body, even including the bladder, poured out quantities of blood. There was a general hæmorrhagic condition.†

Digitalis purpurea, L. (Purple foxglove.) Dr. William Henry was called in October, 1809, to visit a female, an out patient of the Manchester Infirmary, and labouring under dropsy, who had taken an overdose of the decoction of foxglove. It was prepared by boiling two handfuls of the leaves in a quart of water, and then pressing the mass, so as to expel the whole of the liquor. Of this at 7 A. M. she drank two teacups full, amounting in the whole, to not less than ten ounce measures. Before eight she began to be sick and vomited parts of the contents of her stomach. Enough, however, was retained to excite violent vomiting and retching throughout the whole of that and the following day, during which, every thing that was taken was instantly rejected. In the intervals of sickness, she was excessively faint, and her skin was covered with a cold sweat. The tongue and lips swelled, and there was a constant flow of viscid saliva from the mouth. Very little urine was voided on the day she took the digitalis, and on the two following days the action of the kidneys was entirely suspended. When Dr. Henry saw her, which was forty eight-hours after she had taken the poison, the tongue was white, the ptyalism continued, though in a less degree, and the breath was fœtid. The pulse was low, irregular, (not exceeding forty,) and after every third or fourth pulsation, an intermission occurred for some seconds. She complained also of general pains in the limbs, and cramps in the legs. By the use of effervescing draughts, and ether with ammonia, she gradually recovered her imperfect health. Dr. Henry remarks, that she had not taken any mercury, and that the ptyalism was entirely the effect of the digitalis.‡

* Case by Mr. Dillon in Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 2.

† Lancet, N. S. vol. 7, p. 281. Some curious facts on the effects of climate, on the properties of drugs and colchicum in particular, are stated in Dr. A. T. Thomson's Elements of Materia Medica, vol. 1, p. 72.

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 148. This symptom has been

A man labouring under asthma, imprudently took an ounce of the tincture of digitalis. He immediately fell asleep, and slept for three hours and a half. After this, on awakening, he vomited, and likewise had a motion. He then again slept quietly. A strong emetic was now given, which operated well, and he continued tranquil and his pulse regular. After two or three hours, however, his pulse began to intermit. Strong punch was given in divided doses, and also carbonate of ammonia. This supported the system, though the pulse was at one period as low as thirty-six in a minute. The intermission lasted for about twelve hours, and *the asthma was cured*.*

A quack was tried in London in 1826, for administering an over dose of digitalis. By his advice, a young lad took, early in the morning, about six ounces of a strong decoction. Very soon afterwards, vomiting, severe pains in the bowels and purging ensued. In the afternoon he became lethargic and slept profoundly for several hours; but when he awoke, vomiting and pain returned. Convulsions ensued, with dilated and insensible pupil, and a slow, small and irregular pulse, and in 22 hours from swallowing the drug, the boy died. On dissection, the internal membranes of the brain were found much injected with blood, and the inner coat of the stomach was red in some places. The other parts were healthy.†

In France, this substance is prescribed medicinally in very large doses, and instances of sudden death are hence not uncommon.‡

Dr. A. T. Thomson asserts, that foxglove acts powerfully

noticed by other practitioners. Dr. Barton mentions having seen it produced in a child from ordinary doses. (Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, part 1, p. 30.) Another case is related in *ibid.* vol. 1, part 2, p. 43. Dr. Barton quotes the following remark from Dr. Withering. "I am doubtful whether it does not sometimes excite a copious flow of saliva." (Withering's Tracts, vol. 2, p. 285.)

* Case by Dr. Fogo, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 18, p. 345. See also a case quoted from Dr. Beddoes in *Orfila*, vol. 2, p. 228. Some useful cautions as to the use of digitalis are given in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 1, p. 510, American edition.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 27, p. 223. The prisoner was acquitted, on the ground that his advice had been asked.

‡ *London Medical Quarterly Review*, vol. 2, p. 454. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 2, p. 489.

in exciting the generative organs; and that one of the effects of an over dose, is inflammation of the genitals, in both sexes.*

As an instance of its inertness, I may add, that Dr. Robbins relates of an intemperate man, who in a fit of passion, took half an ounce of the tincture. It remained on his stomach for one hour, without causing vertigo, affection of the pulse or dilated pupil. At the end of that time, an emetic was given with effect.†

When administered to animals in the form of powder, or extract, or infusion of the leaves, it excites vomiting, anxiety, melancholy, smallness and slowness of pulse, involuntary stools, and convulsions—death closes the train of symptoms.

Mr. Le Royer, some years since, obtained an active principle from the leaves of this plant, which he calls *digitaline*. A grain in solution injected into the stomach of a rabbit, caused death in a few minutes, without agitation or pain. Similar effects were induced in larger animals by increased doses.‡ It is, however, still doubtful, whether there is a distinct active principle in this plant.§

Scilla Maritima, L. (Squill.) The root of this plant in over doses causes sickness, vomiting, diarrhœa, and bloody urine. It likewise, according to Christison, produces narcotic symptoms. Lange mentions the case of a woman who died from taking a spoonful of the root in powder to cure tympanites. She was seized with violent pain and died soon in convulsions. The stomach was found every where inflamed, and in some parts eroded. Twenty-four grains of the powder have proved fatal.||

When administered to animals, either internally or injected into the veins, violent efforts to vomit, dilated pupils and lethargy were caused, and in a few hours, violent convulsions and death.¶

* Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, vol. 2, p. 465.

† Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 723.

‡ Brande's Journal, vol. 18, p. 178. On the oil of digitalis, see Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 39, p. 381.

§ Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 7, p. 220.

|| Christison, p. 744.

¶ Orfila's Toxicology, 3d edition, vol. 2, p. 202.

Vogel has discovered an acrid principle in the squill, denominated *scillitin*.

Ipecacuanha. This substance is obtained from several plants of the genera *cephaelis* and *psycotria*.* In itself, it can hardly be deemed poisonous, except in very large doses.† But a very powerful alkaloid has been obtained from it by Pelletier, and which is termed *emetin*.‡ Two grains of this will kill a dog; and the symptoms are frequent vomiting, followed by lethargy and coma. Death ensues in 15 or 20 hours, and the stomach and lungs are found inflamed.

The same effects occur when it is injected into a vein, or applied to a wound.§

Of secondary consequence, but arranged in this group by Orfila, are:

Ruta graveolens, L. (Rue.) The distilled water and watery extract in large quantity, caused death in animals after a long interval, but its effects are not powerful.

Anagallis arvensis, L. (Meadow pimpernel.) Naturalized in the United States. Its extract produces in animals dejection, insensibility and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach and rectum were found inflamed, and the lungs livid.

Aristolochia clematitis, L. (Common birthwort.) Vomiting, convulsive motions, weakness of the posterior extremities, dejection and death, were induced by its root. The stomach and rectum somewhat inflamed.

Nerium oleander, L. (Common oleander. Rose-bay.) The extract of this plant produced in animals, vomiting, vertigo, weakness of the extremities, convulsions and death. The dis-

* See Abel's Journey in China. Appendix, p. 335. Edinburgh Journal of Natural and Geographical Science, vol. 2, p. 17. On the roots that yield the ipecacuanha of commerce, Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, vol. 26. Dr. Griffith, in Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 3, p. 181.

† In some constitutions, however, its effluvia induces difficult breathing, anxiety, and even spasms. A case is quoted from Rust's Magazine, where these were induced in a person, from pounding the root, during three hours. Vomiting and dangerous dyspnoea ensued, and these were relieved only by the use of active remedies. (Lancet, N. S. vol. 8, p. 38.)

‡ The same substance has been found in the *Viola odorata*, L. by Boullay. Brande's Journal, vol. 17, p. 385. See also Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 6, p. 194. Duncan's Supplement, p. 58.

§ Magendie.

tilled water and powder are less active. The digestive canal was not affected.

Morgagni (who also called this plant *Rhododaphne*) relates the case of a female, who drank some of the juice. Vomiting soon succeeded. Her lips were brown; the pulse small and weak; the power of speech was lost, and she lay insensible. Death ensued nine hours after taking the juice. On dissection, the back of the body was universally of a violet colour, but the anterior, natural. There was some heat of the body, though seventeen hours had elapsed since death; the bloodvessels of the stomach, intestines and omentum, were much distended; the stomach contained a greenish fluid, but its membranes were sound; the right lung was red and adhering, while the left was completely collapsed. All the other viscera were natural.*

Tanghinia veneniflua. Boyer. *Cerbera Tanghin*, a native of Madagascar, and where the seeds are said to be employed as an ordeal for the detection of persons accused of crimes.† According to the experiments of Dr. Ollivier, of Angers, it produced in animals, vomiting, great weakness, dilated pupils, convulsions, succeeded by lethargy. Mr. Henry has obtained from it a white and crystallizable substance, to which the acrid properties are attributed; and another, styled *tanguin*, to which the narcotic symptoms are to be ascribed.‡

Cerbera alovai, L. Its nut is highly deliterious, and the wood, when thrown into the water, intoxicates fishes. The

* Morgagni, vol. 3, p. 387. Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 259. The *Nerium odorum*, Aiton, has its root poisonous, and "is but too often resorted to for the purpose of self-destruction, by the Hindoo women, when tormented with jealousy." (Ainslie's *Materia Indica*, vol. 2, p. 23.)

† Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, vol. 6, p. 264. Under the name of *Cerbera Tanghin*, Mr. Telfair, in a letter from the Mauritius, dated March 8, 1829, gives an interesting account of this substance. It is not much larger than an almond, yet it is sufficient to destroy twenty persons. He was present on an occasion when it was given to the servants of the King of Madagascar, on a suspicion of his having been poisoned. The kernel was pounded fine with a stone, and every one was made to swallow a portion of it. On some, it began to act in half an hour or less. Those whose stomachs reject it early, generally recover. On this occasion, there were only two individuals in whom this was the case. The others were thrown, in a state of insensibility, into a hole, and every person present was obliged to throw ground over them, so that the burial was quickly completed. Radama abolished the use of this as an ordeal. (*Transylvania Journal*, vol. 3, p. 420, from Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, February, 1830.)

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, 3d edit. v. 2, p. 338. *Bulletin des Sciences Med.* v. 3, p. 80.

Cerbera manghas, L. is equally so. A Javanese woman (says Dr. Horsfield) swallowed, out of curiosity, about a scruple of the external part of the fruit; it produced partial delirium, and temporary blindness, but she retained the power of speech.*

Cerbera thevetia, L. is a native of Gaudaloupe, and according to Dr. Ricord Madianna, its seeds operate similarly on animals. In large doses, it caused death; and on dissection, the head and stomach were found much injected with blood.†

Several species of *Apocynum*, as the *androsæmifolium*, *cannabinum* and *venetum*, furnish an acrid milky juice, which inflames and ulcerates the skin. The first and second of these are American plants.

Asclepias gigantea, L. Bauhin asserts, that the juice of this given in the dose of a drachm and a half, has produced violent symptoms, and a fatal hæmorrhage. When Orfila administered to dogs, the *Asclepias vincetoxicum*, L. the animals died at the end of one or two days, and their stomachs were found inflamed.

Cynanchum erectum, L. (*Pergularia erecta*, Spreng.) Plenck relates, that thirty-six grains of the leaves of this plant administered to a dog, produced violent vomiting, a trembling, convulsions and death. The *Cynanchum viminalis*, L., (*Sarcostemma viminalis*, R. Br.) furnishes a milky juice, extremely caustic.

Cissus glandulosa, Gmel, and *quadrangularis*, L. (*Sælanthus glandulosus* and *quadrangulus* of Forskal,) are acrid, and according to Orfila, poisonous.

Mercurialis perennis, L. (Mountain mercury. Dog's mercury.) This plant is hurtful both to man and animals. It causes vomiting, diarrhœa, profound sleep, and convulsions. Ray relates the case of a man, his wife and three children, who experienced deleterious effects from eating it, fried with bacon.‡

An Irish female at Boston, mistaking this for a common green in her native country, cooked it as such. In half an

* Ainslie's *Materia Indica*, vol. 2, p. 262.

† *Annals of the New-York Lyceum of Natural History*, vol. 1, p. 86.

‡ *London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 15, p. 71. The case of a family poisoned by it, (of whom some died,) is mentioned in the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. 17, p. 875.

hour, it caused delirium, stertorous breathing and coma. An emetic of sulphate of zinc, however, relieved her.*

The treatment of the poisons enumerated until now in this chapter, resolves itself into an endeavour to remove the noxious substance, by emetics or the stomach pump. Enemas are also adviseable, if the poison has been retained any time, to procure its discharge by the bowels. If symptoms of cerebral congestion supervene, venesection is adviseable, and afterwards diluted acidulated drinks, frequently repeated. Inflammation is to be met by its proper remedies.†

We come now to a class of narcotico-acrids which induce violent tetanic spasms, without impairing the sensibility; but on the other hand, heightening it. They have also local irritant properties, although these are seldom observed, on account of the rapidity of their deleterious action. And in consequence of this last, but few morbid appearances are observed.‡

Brucea antidysenterica, Mill. (False angustura bark.) This substance resembles the real angustura, and this fact indeed was noticed, shortly after the discovery of the plant by Mr. Bruce;§ but it was not until a few years since, that its deleterious nature was discovered. A patient under the care of Dr. Rambach, at Hamburgh, experienced poisonous effects from the use of a decoction; and death also resulted from it in Hungary and Berne. This led to an examination, and it was ascertained that two species are known in commerce—the genuine, called West Indian, and the spurious, East Indian angustura, (*brucea*.) Several experiments on animals confirmed its poisonous nature. The Austrian government was so impressed with the danger to be apprehended, that it ordered all the angustura bark in the empire, genuine and spurious, to be burnt, and interdicted its further importation. Its sale was also prohibited in Denmark; and in Russia and Wirtemberg, the characters distinguishing each were published by authority.|| Some of these may be briefly enumerated.

* Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 3, p. 358.

† Orfila's Toxicology, 3d edition, vol. 2, p. 200.

‡ Christison, p. 750.

§ See Medical Commentaries, vol. 15, p. 184.

|| Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 13, p. 211.

The taste of the genuine is aromatic bitter, that of the spurious, highly and disgustingly bitter. The concentrated infusion of the first is clear and reddish-brown, and when diluted becomes yellow. If an alkali be added, it is changed to a dark-red, and a solution of persulphate or permuriate of iron, imparts to it a high red colour, and after some time throws down a rose-coloured precipitate. The infusion of the last is not so clear, of a dirty brown colour, and when diluted, does not become yellow. On the addition of an alkali, it becomes greenish, and a solution of sulphate of iron, gives it a dark green colour, and throws down a copious satin black precipitate.*

Animals are readily destroyed by this substance, and the symptoms are violent convulsions, resembling tetanus, and which occur in paroxysms. The animal expires in one of these. On dissection, no inflammation is found. Professor Emmert, of Tübingen, communicated the following case to Orfila: "A child died after having taken by mistake, a decoction of this bark; he preserved the use of his intellectual faculties, and earnestly begged that he might not be touched, for he experienced terrible cramps after each time that he was handled. He had a copious perspiration, but did not vomit."†

Pelletier and Caventou discovered an alkaloid in this substance, on which its poisonous properties depend, and which is called *brucine* or *brucea*. It produces tetanus and death; but though poisonous, it acts only with one twelfth of the energy of strychnine. Four grains were necessary to kill a rabbit.‡

Strychnos nux-vomica, L. A native of Ceylon, and the coasts of Coromandel and Malabar. The seeds are what is commonly called *nux vomica*, and this is the poisonous ingredient. It has of late years been frequently used in cases of suicide, and a narrative of its effects is therefore necessary.§

* For a further list of its distinguishing characters, see Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 280. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 13, p. 210. Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 2, p. 158.

† Emmert, in London Medical Repository, vol. 6, p. 89.

‡ Annals of Philosophy, vol. 16, p. 30. Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 3, p. 303. It is denied by some, that the bark of the brucea will yield this, and the article mistaken for it, is said to be the bark of the *Strychnos nux-vomica*.

§ This poison seems to have been known in the time of Valentini. See his Pandects, vol. 1, p. 622. *De nuce vomica penes furem deprehensa*.

Mr. Ollier saw a young woman who, in a fit of melancholy, took nearly half an ounce. Half an hour after, she was found by him calm and well. He went away in search of an emetic, and on his return found that slight convulsions had occurred. These increased rapidly in frequency and violence, darting out the extremities, and stiffening the body. In the short intervals, she was sensible, but had a feeble pulse, and complained of sickness and great thirst. She died in an hour after swallowing the poison.*

A young lady took by mistake a table spoonful of the powder of *nux vomica*, She was instantly deprived of the power of walking, and fell down, but without losing her recollection. Dr. Basedow (of Merseburg) saw her immediately. The pupils were contracted, pulse small, and skin cool. The forearm was half bent, and the hands and fingers had convulsive twitches. The legs were rigid, and all the muscles tetanically contracted. She had not the slightest pain or sickness, but her breathing became every moment more difficult, and she complained of impending suffocation. She was gradually relieved by an emetic, and small doses of oil of turpentine and sulphuric ether. The dyspnœa gradually subsided, and towards evening the tetanic spasms had ceased.†

These instances, one of death and the other of recovery, might be multiplied; but they are sufficient to give an idea of the usual symptoms.‡ It would appear, that in smaller doses the effects are more distinctly those of the narcotico-acrid poisons. Heat and burning in the stomach, stiffness of the joints, convulsive tremors, and at last violent fits of tetanus, were noticed in a case where about a drachm had been taken. To this followed redness and inflammation of the tongue, burning thirst, pain in the stomach, and hot skin. Next day, though the fits had ceased, the muscles were very sore, especially on motion. Colic and diarrhœa, with vomiting, occur-

* London Medical Repository, vol. 19, p. 448.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 31, p. 445.

‡ Other cases are given in Christison, p. 754, etc. London Medical Gazette, vol. 3, p. 445, by Mr. Baynham. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, v. 35, p. 451, by Mr. Watt, (from Glasgow Medical Journal,) Lancet, vol. 10, p. 732.

red; but on the fourth day they disappeared, and she became convalescent.*

Its action on the paralytic, is striking. A patient at the Hospital St. Louis, in Paris, labouring under hemiplegia of the right side, took twenty-four pills of it. He would have suffered severely, if proper remedies had not been instantly administered; but the convulsions which always accompany this poison, continued, and afterwards affected only the diseased part, so that the arm which before was lifeless, was now strangely and constantly agitated.†

Appearances on dissection. In Mr. Ollier's case, the parts were almost natural; the brain somewhat congested, and the heart empty. In a dissection by Orfila and Barruel, where death was also speedy, the spinal plexus of veins were slightly gorged, the pia mater red and injected, and the cerebral substance soft, and presented a number of bloody spots on cutting into it. The spinal marrow was natural; the mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines, blanched; but here and there on the former, a red patch. Lungs gorged with black fluid blood.‡

According to the time that elapses before death, will be the marks of inflammation in the stomach and intestines. This is shown by comparing the dissections mentioned by Christison.§

No substance has been more repeatedly made the subject of experiment than the nux vomica and the alkaloid found in it. This was discovered by Pelletier and Caventou, and is denominated *strychnia* or *strychnine*. Its effects are most rapid and violent. Magendie killed a dog with one eighth of a grain; and the Editor of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal says, that he has himself seen one die in two mi-

* Tacheron, Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 4, p. 500. It is singular that the natives of Hindostan use this substance for many months continuously, beginning with a small quantity and increasing, sometimes to twenty grains, without any bad effect, provided it be not taken on an empty stomach; if this be neglected, spasms are apt to ensue. The nut is taken in its natural state, or half roasted. The seeds are employed in the distillation of country spirits, to render them more intoxicating. (Baker, in Transactions of Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta, vol. 1, p. 138.)

† London Medical Repository, vol. 7, p. 163.

‡ Lancet, vol. 8, p. 56, from Archives Generales.

§ Christison, p. 757.

nutes after the injection of one-sixth of a grain.* "There is little doubt," says Christison, "that half a grain thrust into a wound, might kill a man in less than a quarter of an hour."†

Tests. Nux vomica in powder has a dirty greenish gray colour, an intensely bitter taste, and an odour like powder of liquorice. It inflames on burning charcoal, and if nitric acid be added to it, takes an orange red colour, which is destroyed by the addition of protochloride of tin. Its infusion becomes orange red by nitric acid, and is precipitated grayish white with tincture of galls.

Orfila and Barruel ascertained its presence in the dead body. They advise that the contents of the stomach be boiled in water acidulated with sulphuric acid. (This, if it be nux vomica, will become yellowish.) The filtered liquid is then to be neutralized with carbonate of lime, and evaporated to dryness. The dry mass is then acted on with successive portions of alcohol, and evaporated to the consistence of a thin syrup. Ammonia precipitates this, it becomes deep orange red, with nitric acid, and will deposit, if left standing, in a day or two, crystals of strychnine.‡

Strychnos Ignatii, L. or *Ignatia amara*, (Bean of St. Ignatius.) Its operation is similar to the nux vomica. Dr. Hopf relates of a man who was attacked with tetanus of several hours duration, after taking the powder of half a bean in brandy.§ The native Indian practitioners are said to use it

* Among the experimenters on nux vomica and strychnine, I may enumerate, Magendie and Delille, *Eclectic Repertory*, vol. 3, p. 274. Segalas, in *London Medical Repository*, vol. 25, p. 552; vol. 26, p. 61. Somerville, Harlan, Coates, Lawrence and Hubbard, in *Chapman's Journal*, vol. 2, p. 192; vol. 3, p. 296; vol. 4, p. 242. Dr. A. T. Thomson, in *London Medical Gazette*, vol. 8, p. 50. Review of Bardsley on Strychnia and Brucia, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 33, p. 406. See also *Annals of Philosophy*, vol. 16, p. 28. Brande's *Journal*, vol. 7, p. 375. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 18, p. 159; vol. 19, p. 495.

† Instances are multiplying of the dangerous and fatal effects of applying strychnine and its salts to the skin, in too large quantities, (*endermically*, as it is styled.) See Magendie and Guthrie, in *Lancet*, N. S. vol. 15, p. 117, 321. Richter, in *North American Archives*, vol. 2, p. 137.

‡ Christison, p. 752. *Lancet*, vol. 2, p. 56. The red, with nitric acid, will only occur when some brucia is present, combined with the strychnia. (Caventou.)

§ Christison, p. 759.

in cholera, and too large doses frequently cause vertigo and convulsions.*

Strychnos tieute, Leschen. From this plant is obtained the *upas tieute* of Java.† Numerous experiments have been performed with it on animals. It induces tetanus, asphyxia, and death, with great rapidity, and on dissection, Dr. Horsfield found the brain highly inflamed. Criminals in Java are said to be wounded by arrows poisoned with it, and death follows in a few minutes. Pelletier and Caventou obtained strychnine from this species also, combined with various colouring matters.

Upas Antiar is the juice of a large tree in Java, denominated by Leschenault, *Antiaris toxicaria*. The ancient opinion concerning the deadly influence of the vapour of the bohon upas, is now generally abandoned; but it is evident from the nature of these two indigenious substances, that there was much foundation for the accounts given of the virulence of the native poisons. In small doses it acts as an irritant, but in large ones, causes convulsions and coma.

It operates, however, more slowly than the *tieute*, and according to Mr. Brodie, death is caused by rendering the heart insensible to the stimulus of the blood, and stopping the circulation. The heart, after death, is found to have lost its irritability.

The French chemists could detect no strychnine in it, but found a bitter substance, soluble in water and alcohol, and concentrating all the noxious qualities of the poison. In very small quantities, it proved rapidly fatal.‡

* Transactions of Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta, vol. 3, p. 432.

† Upas is probably a common adjunct in the Javanese language to all poisonous plants.

‡ The following are authorities deserving of consultation on the *tieute* and *antiar*. Quarterly Review, vol. 6, p. 514. American edition. Annals of Philosophy, vol. 9, p. 202 and 265, containing Dr. Horsfield's essays on oopas, or the poison tree of Java, extracted from the Batavian Transactions. Horsfield writes those poisons thus, *ant-shar* and *tshittik*. Orfila, vol. 2, p. 260, 287. Eclectic Repertory, vol. 2, p. 281. Brodie's Experiments from Philosophical Transactions. Hosack's Medical and Philosophical Register, vol. 1, p. 171, containing Delille's dissertation on the upas tieute. Annals of Philosophy, vol. 4, p. 259. See also Medical Commentaries, vol. 15, p. 36. Pelletier and Caventon's paper in full in Repertory of Patent Inventions, 2nd series, vol. 45, p. 185. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 23, p. 224. Albers, Nees and Emmert's Experiments on Tieute, American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 7, p. 223. Penny Magazine, vol. 2, p. 322. Burnett's Outlines of Botany, p. 552.

To these it is common to subjoin the following poisons, whose exact nature is unknown.

Ticunas, according to De la Condamine, is an extract obtained from various plants by the Indians of South America. The experiments of Fontana with it, indicate that it produces death in animals, either externally applied or internally given. The ordinary symptoms are convulsions, faintings, great debility and loss of feeling.*

Woorara is a poison with which the Indians of Guiana arm the points of their arrows. It does not appear to differ essentially from the *ticunas*. Mr. Brodie has performed several experiments with it, and he imagines it to produce death by destroying the functions of the brain.†

Curare. The war poison of the Indians on the banks of the Oronooko, in South America. Some interesting details concerning its preparation, are contained in the note extracted from one of the latest volumes of Humboldt's Personal Narrative.‡

* See the experiments of Fontana in Philosophical Transactions, vol. 70, p. 163; also Dr. Brocklesby's, *ibid.* vol. 44, p. 408, and Herissant's, *ibid.* vol. 47, p. 75.

† Eclectic Repertory vol. 2, p. 289. Dr. Hancock on the Worari. (Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 6, p. 50.)

‡ Esmeralda is the most celebrated spot on the Oronooko for the fabrication of this poison. The Indians collect the liana (*bejuco*) for the preparation of this, (the *curare*) and it bears the same name as in the forest of Javita. It is the *Bejuco de mavacure*, which is gathered in abundance on the east of the Mission, on the left bank of the Oronooko and in other places. "The juice of the liana when it has been recently gathered, is not regarded as poisonous; perhaps it acts in a sensible manner only when it is strongly concentrated. It is the bark and a part of the alburnum which contains the terrible poison. Branches of the *mavacure*, four or five lines in diameter, are scraped with a knife, and the bark that comes off is bruised and reduced into very thin filaments, on the stone employed for grinding cassava. The venomous juice being yellow, the whole fibrous mass takes this colour. It is thrown into a funnel made of the leaf of a plantain tree, nine inches high, with an opening four inches wide. A cold infusion is first prepared by pouring water on the fibrous matter, which is the ground bark of the *mavacure*—a yellowish water filters during several hours, drop by drop, through the leafy funnel. This filtered water is the venomous liquor, but it acquires strength only when it is concentrated by evaporation, like molasses in a large earthen pot. The Indians from time to time invited us to taste the liquid. Its taste, more or less bitter, decides when the concentration by fire has been carried sufficiently far. There is no danger in this, the *curare* being deleterious only when it comes into immediate contact with the blood. The vapours, therefore, that are disengaged from the pans, are not hurtful, notwithstanding what has been asserted on this point by the missionaries of the Oronooko. Fontana, in his fine experiments with the poison of the *ticunas* of the river of Amazon, long ago proved that the vapours arising from this poison, when thrown on burning charcoal, may be inhaled without apprehension, and that it is false, as M. de la Condamine has announced, that Indian women when condemned to death, have been killed by the vapours of the poison of the *ticunas*.

Laurus-camphora, L. Camphor when introduced into the stomach of dogs, produced general convulsions, loss of hearing, foaming at the mouth, and difficult breathing. Vomiting ensued and they recovered. But when the œsophagus was tied, the consequence was death, and the stomach presented an inflammatory appearance, and in one case ulceration.

Several cases of its effects on man are stated by Dr. Christison. One was of Mr. Alexander on himself. He swallowed in one dose two scruples. In the course of twenty minutes he became languid, and this soon ended in giddiness. At length he lost all consciousness, and strong convulsions, with maniacal frenzy, ensued. He was relived by an emetic. In Dr. Edwards' patient, as detailed by Orfila, the symptoms were excited by an injection containing a drachm of camphor. It induced staggering and great weakness, with mobility of mind.

Another instance is given by Professor Wendt of Breslau. An intemperate man took four ounces of camphorated spirits prescribed for him as an embrocation. Soon after he was seized with fever, burning heat of the skin, anxiety, pain in the stomach, giddiness, dimness of sight and some delirium. Almond oil and vinegar restored him to health, without any vomiting. A difficulty in passing urine continued for some days.*

The juice is thickened with a glutinous substance to cause it to stick to the darts, which it renders mortal, but taken internally, the Indians consider the curare to be an excellent stomachic. Scarcely a fowl is eaten (adds our author) on the banks of the Oronooko, which has not been killed by a poisoned arrow. The missionaries pretend that the flesh of animals is never so good as when these means are employed. Father Zea, who accompanied us, though ill of a tertian fever, caused every morning, the live fowl allotted for our repast, to be brought to his hammock, together with an arrow. Notwithstanding his habitual state of weakness, he would not confide this operation, to which he attached great importance, to any other person. Large birds, when wounded in the thigh, perish in two or three minutes; but it is often ten or twelve before a pig or a pecari expires." M. Humboldt does not seem to be acquainted with any certain antidote, if such exists, to this fatal poison. Sugar, garlic, the muriate of soda, &c. are mentioned doubtfully. (Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine, vol. 58, p. 233. See also Orfila, vol. 2, p. 479.)

There is a curious paper on the plants employed by the ancient inhabitants of Europe for poisoning their arrows, by Coquebert, in Philosophical Magazine, vol. 18, p. 163. He supposes that the juice of the various species of hellebore was used.

Dr. Christison remarks that the best account of the above poison, is that by Emmert, published in 1818. They do not produce convulsions or spasms of the muscles, but sudden paralysis. In this way, death is probably caused by suspending the respiration. According to Emmert, the spine only is acted upon, and not the brain, p. 761.

* Christison, p. 763.

Dr. Eickhorn of New-Orleans, relates the effects produced on him from taking about 120 grains, as resembling the intoxication of champagne. Copious perspiration and weakness ensued.*

Cocculus indicus. The fruit of the *Menispermum cocculus*, a native of Malabar and Ceylon. It is used in India for the purpose of intoxicating, and thus killing fish, and this is done by throwing the berries on the surface of the water. Goupil, a physician of Nemours, ascertained that it destroyed fish not only, but also carnivorous quadrupeds; and Orfila has proved the same on dogs. It acts, he observes, on the brain, and produces convulsions.†

Dr. T. D. Mitchell reports a case where a female took a drink from a bottle containing alcohol, in which the cocculus had been infused for the purpose of destroying vermin. She was comatose, foaming at the mouth, and now and then convulsed. A tobacco cataplasm excited vomiting and purging, and she was relieved.‡

Boullay discovered in this substance a peculiar alkaloid, termed *picROTOXINE*. It is highly poisonous. Ten grains of it killed a dog in the second paroxysm of tetanus.§

Coriaria myrtifolia, L. (Myrtle leaved sumach.) Sauvages states, that a labouring man and a child died in horrible convulsions, within half an hour after eating some of the berries of this plant.||

In July, 1828, four little girls in France ate some of the berries by mistake. They were all soon attacked with the signs of intoxication, the countenance was livid, and convulsions and loss of speech succeeded. The pupils became dilated, and comatose symptoms supervened. All, however, recovered after vomiting was induced, except the youngest,

* American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 11, p. 248.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 305.

‡ Western Medical Gazette, vol. 1, p. 20.

§ Annals of Philosophy, vol. 2, p. 438; vol. 13, p. 70. Brewster's Edinburgh Journal of Science, vol. 5, p. 184.

|| The seeds of the *Coriaria sarmentosa* of Forster (wine berry shrub of New-Zealand) are poisonous and produce convulsions and delirium. (G. Bennet in London Medical Gazette, vol. 8, p. 752.)

who sunk under the effects in sixteen hours. On dissection, the membranes of the brain were found much injected, the heart healthy, the lungs gorged, the œsophagus inflamed at its cardiac portion; and there were some red patches in the stomach and intestines. The membranes of the spinal cord were injected.*

In his experiments on animals with this substance, Professor Meyer of Bonn found that it excited violent fits of tetanus, succeeded by apoplectic coma. A drachm of the extract of the juice was sufficient to kill cats and dogs. On dissection, the brain is seen gorged with blood; the blood fluid, and the inner membrane of the stomach yellowish and shrivelled.†

As to the treatment proper in poisons of this class, although the operation of the more powerful is extremely rapid, yet emetics or the stomach pump are no less necessary. In the case of *nux vomica*, this is particularly required, as its powder adheres with great obstinacy to the inside of the stomach. Artificial respiration and tracheotomy are advised by Magendie and Orfila, in imminent cases. The latter also has found some benefit, in his experiments on animals, from giving diluted ether or spirits of turpentine. In case the poison has been applied to wounds, the cautery is proper.

Dr. Donne of Paris has announced that iodine, bromine and chlorine, are antidotes to strychnine, if they be given instantly. In numerous experiments on animals, he found the compounds previously prepared to be innocuous. It is, however, unfortunate that a delay of ten minutes destroys their power; and again, the salts of strychnine are more common than the pure alkaloid, and on these the antidotes have no effect.‡

Poisonous mushrooms. The number and variety of these are so great, that it will unnecessarily enlarge our pages to copy the botanical description of each. I will therefore only state

* Dr. Roux of Montaubon. London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 61, p. 292. Burnett's Outlines of Botany, vol. 4, p. 887.

† Christison, p. 767. Rabbits are not affected by this poison.

‡ Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 6, p. 431. Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 2, p. 202.

The fruit of the plant *Feuillea cordifolia*, has been announced by Drapiez as an antidote against vegetable poisons. He poisoned dogs with the *Rhus toxicodendron*, hemlock and *nux vomica*, and recovered them with this fruit. (Annals, vol. 15, p. 389.) This, however, is not original with M. Drapiez, as Moseley mentions the same plant as an antidote. (Moseley on Tropical Diseases, p. 37.)

a few characters which should lead us to doubt concerning their qualities, and for further particulars, refer to systematic writers on this subject.

The following indications should excite a suspicion of mushrooms: A marshy situation in the shade; the substance soft, porous and moist; an ugly appearance, and the surface more or less dirty; a glairy coat covering the surface; a virulent smell; a bright colour, or a combination of different colours. We should also regard as dangerous, all which have bulbous or soft stems, or have fragments of skin glued to their surface.*

The symptoms which generally arise from eating poisonous mushrooms, are thus given in a report to the Society of Medicine of Bordeaux, and which is quoted by Orfila with high approbation. "Pains of the stomach, gripes, nausea, evacuations upwards and downwards, are the first symptoms with which the patients are attacked. Shortly after, heat of the bowels and faintings; the pains become more continued and violent; cramps, convulsions, sometimes general, sometimes partial, and unquenchable thirst succeed; the pulse is small, hard, tight, and very frequent. When the symptoms, after having lasted a certain time, do not diminish in consequence of the relief afforded, vertigo, a stupid delirium, and drowsiness affect some subjects, and are only interrupted by the pains and convulsions. In others there is no drowsiness; the pains and convulsions exhaust the strength; faintings and cold sweats come on, and death puts a period to this series of sufferings, after having been foreseen and announced by the patient himself, who has not lost his senses for a single moment."†

Poisonous mushrooms do not manifest their action generally until six or eight hours after they are eaten, and even twelve or sixteen sometimes elapse.

The appearances on dissection are as follows:—"Violet-coloured spots over the integuments, very extensive and numerous; the abdomen extremely bulky; the conjunctiva as it were injected; the pupil contracted; the stomach and intestines inflamed, and scattered over with gangrenous spots—

* Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 335.

† Ibid. vol. 2, p. 334.

sphacelus is present in some portions of this viscus, and the stomach and intestines are contracted, so much so indeed that in these latter the thickened membranes have obliterated the canal. The œsophagus, in one subject, was inflamed and gangrenous; and in another, there was an intus-susceptio of the ileon from above downwards, for the space of three inches. One individual alone had the intestines distended with excrementitious matter. In none have any remains of the mushroom been found; they had been either completely digested, or evacuated. The lungs were inflamed and distended with black blood; the same congestion had taken place in almost all the veins of the abdominal viscera, in the liver, spleen and mesentery. Inflammatory and gangrenous spots occur on the membranes of the brain, in its ventricles—on the pleura, lungs, diaphragm, mesentery, bladder, uterus, and even on the fœtus of a pregnant woman. The blood in this subject was extremely fluid; in other persons, it was almost coagulated. Extreme flexibility of the limbs was not a constant appearance.”*

Braconnot and Letellier have analyzed poisonous mushrooms. The latter discovered in one of them a principle, which he called *amanetin*, and which appears to be highly deleterious.†

Treatment. Mushrooms are best combated by emetics, cathartics, and particularly enemas.

Secale cornutum, (Ergot, spurred rye.) There is some diversity of opinion concerning the real nature of this substance. By some, it is supposed to be a diseased process from the juices of the plant. Decandolle, on the other hand, states that

* Cases of poisoning by mushrooms may be found in Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 313 to 333. Fodéré, vol. 4, p. 62.

Transactions Coll. of Physicians of London, vol. 2, p. 216. Case by Dr. Heberden. London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 12, p. 385. Case by Dr. Bardsley.

Ibid. vol. 3, p. 41. Case by Mr. Brande, from the *Agaricus glutinosus*.

Ibid. vol. 20, p. 457. Case by Mr. Parrot.

Christison, p. 768 to 779.

Dr. Drake, Note to De Salle's Tables, p. 68.

Percival's Essays, vol. 2, 187. *Agaricus clypeatus*.

Dr. Clendenning's Lecture on the Fungi, in London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 168.

Lancet, N. S. vol. 4, p. 93; vol. 5, p. 758.

† Vauquelin's experiments on mushrooms, may be found in the Philosophical Magazine, vol. 43, p. 292.

it is caused by the growth of a parasitic plant, a mushroom of the genus *sclerotium*; while probably the most numerous party assert that it is the work of an insect. General Field, of Vermont, stated that he had observed flies puncturing the glumes of the rye during its milky state; and imitating this process himself with a needle, found that in four days a little black point appeared, which gradually became a spur.*

Whatever the cause may be, it is certain that this substance either alone, or contaminating rye, has long been deemed a poison. It is thus stated to have given rise to epidemic diseases at various times, in France, Silesia, Prussia, Bohemia, Saxony and Sweden. Perrault mentions, that in travelling through Sologne in France, he was informed by some physicians and surgeons of that country, that the rye there was sometimes so corrupted, that those who ate bread made of it, were seized with a gangrene, some in one part and some in another; some losing a finger, others a hand or the nose; and that this gangrene was not preceded by any fever, inflammation or considerable pain, but that the parts fell off of themselves: the early symptoms were numbness, cold and livid skin, pain and swelling.†

Tissot, in a paper in the Philosophical Transactions, presents a very copious account of the disease in question, and divides it into two forms, the spasmodic and gangrenous. He observes that the first accurate account of it was published in 1596. The spasmodic disease prevailed, according to Hoffman, in 1648, 1649, and 1675, in Voigtland; in 1702 in Friburg; in 1760 in Saxony and Lusatia, and in 1722 in Silesia. It was frequently attended with epilepsy. The gangrenous form was known in France as early as 1630, and in 1650, 1670 and 1674, it raged in Aquitaine and Sologne. In 1709 it appeared in Switzerland. The symptoms were similar to those already noticed. It attacked persons of both sexes and all ages, and in some instances, only the lower extremities

* See on this subject, Brande's Journal, vol. 2, p. 273, 320; vol. 3, p. 429. Dr. Tully, who supports the opinion of Decandolle, in Silliman's Journal, vol. 2, p. 45. Gen. Field, in *ibid.* vol. 9, p. 359. Christison, p. 783. Burnett (Outlines of Botany, vol. 1, p. 206,) says that the mushroom is not a *Sclerotium*, but *Acinula clavus*.

† Philosophical Transactions, vol. 11, p. 758; see also vol. 52, p. 529, where cases are related that occurred at Orleans and Blois.

became gangrenous, while in others, both upper and lower were affected.*

Mr. Srine has described its effects as occurring in 1736 in Bohemia. It commenced with an uneasy, stinging sensation about the feet. To this, severe cardialgia succeeded, and the hands and head were soon after affected. The fingers were strongly contracted, and there was a sensation of burning in the hands and feet. Giddiness, mania or coma, succeeded, accompanied with opisthotonos, and a foaming at the mouth. These symptoms were followed by a canine appetite. All those who had epileptic symptoms died. The pulse was natural, and the spasms left a stiffness of the limbs. The disease continued two, four, eight, and sometimes even twelve weeks. Out of five hundred persons, three children died.† Gangrene of the extremities has also been observed in animals from the administration of ergot.

By those who are not willing to concede so much power to this substance, the combined influence of famine and poverty is urged as sufficient to explain these endemic diseases. But from the results of experiments made of late years, the probability is in favour of the noxious nature of ergot.‡

Dr. Lorinzer of Berlin (Lorimer, according to Dr. Christison,) relates some experiments made on the healthy subject. A single dose, two drachms for example, excited giddiness, headache, pain and spasms in the stomach, nausea and vomiting, colic and purging.§

Instances of the dangerous effects of this substance (independent of its peculiar action on the uterus,) are not uncommon.||

* Philosophical Transactions, vol. 55, p. 106.

† Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 349. There is a late account of the disease occurring in a part of France, in 1823. (North American Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 192.)

‡ See Samuel Cooper, first Lines, vol. 1, p. 48. Rees' Cyclopedia, Art. *Ignis sacer*, contains some valuable remarks in favour of referring these diseases to deficiency of nourishment, rather than to diseased grain. It was at one time thought by some that the spotted fever which ravaged several districts in the United States, some years since, had its origin in part or altogether from eating this substance, combined with grain. The facts adduced are very unsatisfactory, and lead to no definite conclusion. Some observations on this subject are contained in the New-England Journal, vol. 5, p. 133, 156, (an article by Professor Bigelow,) and p. 235.

§ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 26, p. 453, from Rust's Magazine.

|| Dr. Swett, in Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 11, p. 420. Dr. Hulse

The different attempts at the analysis of ergot have not led to very satisfactory results.* Dr. Hooker of New-Haven, obtained an oil from it which possesses narcotic properties, but apparently exercises no power on parturient women.†

Spurred Maize. It appears from the researches of Roulin that Indian corn is very subject to the spur in Colombia, and that in this state it is noxious to man and animals. Individuals lose their hair and teeth from eating it, but are never attacked with gangrene or convulsions. Hogs and mules also lose the hair, and poultry frequently lay their eggs without any shell.‡

Diseased wheat. When the farinaceous part of this plant becomes converted to a black powder, it imparts injurious qualities to the bread. Foderé states that he saw, in 1808, colics and diarrhœas which arose from this cause.

Lolium temulentum, L. (Darnel.) Naturalized in the United States. Bread made from the farina of the seed of this plant, and taken to the amount of six drachms, caused distraction of thought, indistinct vision, torpor, debility and drowsiness, and these were followed by efforts to vomit. Tremors of the limbs, great depression, and difficulty of speech and vomiting succeeded.§ Similar effects were induced in a family from eating oat-bread mixed with darnel. The tongue exhibited a very strong trembling, and Seeger indeed remarks, that the trembling of the body is one of the most certain signs of poisoning by this plant.|| Animals, and particularly dogs, are affected in the same manner as man. Chickens, however, eat the seeds with greediness, and without any bad consequences.¶

in North-American Archives, vol. 2, p. 81. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 25, p. 435.

* Analysis of Battley, in London Medical Gazette, February, 1831; of Wiggers of Berlin, Lancet, N. S., vol. 11, p. 782.

† Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 10, p. 298.

‡ Christison, p. 733. Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, vol. 7, p. 217.

§ London Medical Repository, vol. 13, p. 260. This is the result of an experiment by Dr. Cordier on himself, with six drachms, taken early in the morning.

|| Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 352. Another case of the noxious effects of darnel is related in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 106. It happened at Genoa, during the scarcity occasioned by its blockade in 1800. See also Christison, p. 732. Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 1.

¶ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 107.

The *Lathyrus cicera*, L. and *Ervum ervilia*, L. (Bitter vetch,) have each proved noxious in France, from their seeds becoming mixed with wheat or rye, and thus forming part of the food used. The symptoms induced, are very similar to those from darnel.*

Cytisus laburnum, L. (Laburnum.) The seeds and flowers of this plant are poisonous. Mr. North, of London, relates a case of a girl, four years old, in whom the eating of the flowers caused convulsive twitchings of the muscles of the face, cold skin, short and laborious respiration, very weak pulse, with ineffectual retchings. She was gradually relieved by vomiting and stimulants.† Dr. George Johnston, of Berwick-upon-Tweed, saw three young children all under seven years, extremely ill from eating the seeds. They were relieved by vomiting.‡

The active principle is contained both in the seeds and flowers. It was discovered by Chevalier and Lassaigne, and denominated *cytissine*. This acts both as a violent emetic and purgative. Chevalier took eight grains, which operated most violently, and he had to combat its effects by large doses of acidulated drinks. In small doses, *cytissine* causes vomiting, convulsions and death, when administered to animals.§

Alcohol. On the effects of this poison, when taken as it ordinarily is by persons in habits of intoxication, it is not necessary for me to enlarge. I have only to refer to the effects of it in a pure state and in large doses, and then by comparing these results with the table published by Mr. Brande, of the quantity of alcohol contained in various kinds of liquors, an idea may be formed of the injury, and indeed danger, to which life is so freely and generally exposed.||

Mr. Brodie injected proof-spirits into the stomach of a rabbit; in five minutes, he lay motionless and insensible; the pupils of the eyes were dilated; there were slight convulsive

* Christison, p. 792.

† London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 62, p. 86.

‡ Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, vol. 6, p. 74.

§ Thomson's Materia Medica, vol. 2, p. 111. London Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 62, p. 93. Christison, p. 793.

|| See Mr. Brande's Tables in his Journal, vol. 5, p. 152.

motions of the extremities; the respiration was laborious, and he finally died at the end of an hour and fifteen minutes. In his further experiments, he found the stomach highly inflamed by the injection of this poison, but never observed any præternatural appearances in the brain. The symptoms, however, produced by spirits, are very analogous, he observes, to those caused by injuries of the brain.*

Orfila found proof-spirits to be a violent poison when injected into the cellular tissue, and that it produced the same effects as when introduced into the stomach. In animals killed with it, the villous coat of the stomach was constantly of a cherry red colour. Dr. Christison remarks, that he has several times observed the same appearances.† There is a beautiful plate (8th) exhibiting the effect of injecting proof-spirits into the stomach of a dog, in Dr. Roupell's *Illustrations of the effects of Poisons*.

In what may be styled poisoning by alcohol, apart from the ordinary effects of intoxication, the comatose state becomes deeper and deeper, with dilatation of the pupils, and inability to swallow. Apoplexy is excited in some cases. "These, however, can scarcely be considered as simple poisoning, but as the result of poisoning developing a tendency to apoplexy." In those instances, where large quantities of spirits are swallowed, as for example, in wagers for prowess in drinking, coma comes on suddenly. The face then is sometimes livid, but more generally ghastly pale; the breathing stertorous, the pupils sometimes much contracted, but more commonly dilated and insensible, and if relief be not speedily obtained, death takes place, sometimes immediately, or at least in a few hours.

Mr. Bedingfield, whose experience unfortunately has been quite extensive, supposes that the degree of danger from intoxication may be best estimated by the irritability of the iris. If it (says he) retain its contractile power, the patient will generally recover, however overpowered his senses may be; but if it remain in a state of extreme dilatation when a strong

* *Eclectic Repertory*, vol. 2, p. 269.

† Christison, p. 800. The experiments of Segalas are to be found in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 10, p. 218.

light is directed upon it, a feeble hope of recovery can only be entertained. This paralysis of the iris is generally accompanied with apoplectic stertor, laboured and imperfect respiration, and a slow oppressed pulse. Next to the insensibility of the iris, want of energy in the stomach indicates the greatest danger.*

Dr. Ogston, of Edinburgh, has published a valuable paper on this subject. Having seen a number of extreme cases, many of which ended in death, he is disposed to classify them with reference to the state of the pupil. In six cases out of twenty-six, it was contracted, and the coma was profound. The body generally preserved its natural warmth; the countenance was pale, and the breathing stertorous. The remaining twenty, with dilated pupil, had the pulse either imperceptible or very feeble and slow; the coma was profound, as in the former, the extremities often cold, the face generally flushed, and the breathing either laborious or calm, but usually slow. Convulsions were not a common consequence. The most dangerous cases, I need hardly add, were in the last class.†

Appearances on dissection. There is some difficulty in accurately ascertaining these, from the fact that most of the subjects have been in long continued habits of intoxication, and the results of this, rather than the immediate indications of poisoning, are present. Congestion, and even actual extravasation of blood in the brain, are not unfrequently found in those in whom apoplexy has been superinduced, and this, although the individual may be quite youthful. In a female, who for fourteen days had been very little in her sober senses,

* Bedingfield, in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 12, p. 493. There is a paper from the French, well worthy of perusal, on the symptoms of intoxication, in *New-England Journal*, vol; 8, p. 389.

† Phenomena of the more advanced stages of intoxication, with cases and dissections, by F. Ogston, M. D. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 40, p. 276. Larrey, in his *Surgical Memoirs*, (p. 6,) says, that many French soldiers died in the Russian expedition from drinking the *chenaps*, (schnaps,) the brandy of the country. It is obtained from corn; and to this fermented liquor, plants of the narcotic class are added. Those who died showed the following symptoms: loss of muscular motion; vertigo and drowsiness; the eyes half closed, dull and weeping, and the conjunctiva appearing as though injected. These are to be considered as the *ordinary* effects of intoxication, and not what we understand as poisonous.

and at the end of that period died comatose. Dr. Christison found an enormous extravasation in the ventricles.*

Should this morbid appearance be absent, it is still very common to find serum in the ventricles, much beyond the natural quantity, with a congested state of the membranes. The lungs are also dilated with dark fluid blood, and there is more or less of frothy mucus in their substance. The air passages are red, but the stomach has seldom been seen to bear the marks of irritation which we should expect, from the result of experiments on animals.† It is hardly necessary to add, that in habitual drinkers, the liver, kidneys, &c., will be more or less diseased.

It has been a curious question, whether, in persons dead from alcohol, the presence of that substance can be detected by the smell. We know that during life the breath is strongly tainted with it. Dr. Cooke, on the authority of Sir Anthony Carlisle, mentions an instance where the fluid found in the ventricles of the brain had the smell and taste of gin. Dr. Christison quotes Dr. Wolff for a similar case where the fluid in the ventricles had the smell of brandy, although the contents of the stomach had not. Dr. Ogston examined the body of a woman who drowned herself in a state of intoxication. "We discovered nearly four ounces of fluid in the ventricles, having all the physical qualities of alcohol, as proved by the united testimony of two other medical men who saw the body opened, and examined the fluid. The stomach also smelt of this fluid."

On the other hand, many cases occur of persons dying in a fit of intoxication, in which this is not perceived, and Dr. Christison says, that he has "several times remarked, that the venous blood and brain of a fresh subject had a smell, which a prepossessed person might have confounded with that

* Christison, p. 301. He also quotes cases from Bernt. See also Newbigging's case, *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 29, p. 412. Ogston's cases, *ibid.* vol. 40, p. 290. Andral's Dissections. *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. 27, p. 99.

† Christison particularly remarks this. A case is also given in the *Lancet*, vol. 10, p. 571, where a chimney sweep drank eighteen glasses of rum in quick succession, (upwards of a quart.) He died in six hours. On dissection, the brain presented bloody spots; on being sliced, its sinuses were loaded with blood; there was but little serum in the ventricles, and the *stomach was natural*.

of alcohol, although no spirituous liquor had been taken before death."*

Treatment. From numerous observations, it would seem that carbonate or acetate of ammonia, given internally, is one of the best remedies for counteracting the severe effects of intoxication.† The cold effusion is very useful, unless the temperature of the body be so low as to render it improper. In such cases, every effort to maintain or restore the natural warmth must be made. Emetics or the stomach pump must also be used. As to venesection, unless the present symptoms indicate its necessity, it is not to be recommended. Many, no doubt, have sunk from its rash use.

Sulphuric ether, introduced into the stomach of animals, when the œsophagus was tied, produced vertigo, great weakness, difficult breathing, drowsiness and death. The mucous membrane of the stomach was highly inflamed, as was also the duodenum; the blood in the heart was black, partly fluid, and partly coagulated.‡

"Some years ago," says Dr. T. D. Mitchell, "a practice obtained among the lads of Philadelphia, of inhaling the vapour of sulphuric ether by way of sport. A small quantity placed in a bladder, was almost instantly converted into vapour, by the application of hot water. By means of a tube and stop cock, the gas could be easily inhaled. In some instances, the experiment excited mere playfulness and sprightly movement, but in several cases, delirium, and even phrenitis was induced, which ended fatally."§

Nitric ether. A gentleman communicated a case at the Lon-

* "A man was convicted at Perth in 1818, of culpable homicide, for having given no less than nine glasses of spirits to a boy of ten years of age, and of which he died in a few hours. He was sentenced to twelve month's imprisonment." (Alison's Principles of the Criminal Law of Scotland, p. 99.)

† Dr. Dupuy of Alfort, injected alcohol into the jugular vein of a horse. It caused all the effects of intoxication, staggering, redness of the conjunctiva, &c. Five grains of carbonate of ammonia, dissolved in water, were then also injected, and the above symptoms immediately ceased. (Lancet, N. S., vol. 8, p. 76.)

‡ Orfila's Toxicology, vol. 2, p. 342. Dr. Godman has announced a curious result from the inspiration of the vapour of sulphuric ether. It produces all the effects of nitrous oxide. Its exhilarating effects were striking, but in one individual, a female, predisposed to consumption, the muscular action induced left a cough, derangement of mind and pain. She had several attacks of violent syncope, and remained ill for some time. (Godman's Western Reporter, vol. 2, p. 111.)

§ Mitchell's Chemistry, p. 172.

don Royal Institution, April, 1830, which had lately happened at a druggist's, from a carboy of nitric ether being placed in a bed-room, and which, bursting in the night, the chamber became filled with the vapour. It had no chimney, and the door was shut. The servant who slept in it was dead. It is added, that this was the second case that had come to the knowledge of the writer.*

A female in the service of Mr. Thomas, druggist at Hay, Breconshire, went to bed in perfect health, but did not rise the next morning at her usual hour. On going to call her, the door was found fastened, and on breaking it open, she was seen dead, lying on the right side, with the arms folded across the breast, as in profound sleep, and the features calm.

The body was opened. The coats of the stomach were a little inflamed, and it contained a little fluid. The intestines were turgid and the lungs gorged. The uterus was found impregnated, and bearing a three months' male foetus. The dissection proceeded no farther. In the room was a large jar, containing upwards of three gallons of nitric ether, broken, and the contents spilt about the room. The apartment being small, and the atmosphere strongly impregnated with this vapour, the medical witnesses were of opinion that the effluvia caused her death, and such was the verdict of the coroner's jury.†

Empyreumatic oils. Some of these act powerfully on the human system, and two are mentioned by Professor Christison, which deserve a brief notice.

One is the empyreumatic oil procured by the destructive distillation of lard. Buchner found that five drops introduced into the throat of a bird proved nearly fatal. The symptoms were excessive exhaustion, slow respiration and insensibility.

Dippel's oil, or rectified empyreumatic oil of hartshorn. Chaussier relates a case where an individual took a spoonful by mistake, and died immediately. No morbid appearances

* London Medical Gazette, vol. 6, p. 88.

† Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter, vol. 1, p. 232. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 35, p. 452. "The woman seems to have died, as in cases of poisoning with carbonic acid, from slow obstruction of the breathing, from gradual asphyxia, and in no other circumstance is it usual to find such extensive and intense congestion of the mucous membranes." (Ibid.)

could be found. Another case is quoted from a French journal, where a female took designedly an ounce and a half. From what could be ascertained, it appears that she vomited; and not finding the action of the poison to her wishes, threw herself into a well and was drowned. The whole body exhaled the peculiar fœtid odour of the oil. The palate, tongue, throat and gullet were white and shrivelled. The stomach outwardly was of a rose tint, crossed by gorged black veins, which here and there had burst and formed patches of extravasation. The oil and some extravasated blood was found in it. Its villous coat was thick, covered with red points, and corrugated. The intestines had similar, but inferior marks of irritation.*

Oil of tar. A young man aged eighteen, took two or three draughts of this substance, and soon became insensible; the pulse was scarcely perceptible, and the extremities cold. The stomach pump and external stimulants were used. Venesection was then tried, with an active enema, but without benefit. The coma continued, and he died in about twelve hours after taking it. On dissection, the mucous membrane of the larynx and trachea was seen highly injected; the lungs gorged with blood, and smelling strongly of the oil. The stomach paler than natural, and in one portion an orange yellow spot. The brain natural.† Other instances have occurred, where, in less quantity, it produced violent vomiting, prostration of strength and pain.

In connexion with these, I may mention the new substance lately discovered by Reichenbach, and termed *Kreosote* or *Creosote*. It is derived either from pyroligneous acid or from the tarry matter that distils over along with that acid. When in a concentrated state, it destroys the epidermis, and insects and fish thrown into it immediately die. According to Miguët, it acts by irritating the surfaces to which it is applied. Redness of the mucous membrane will hence be produced, and the poison may be detected by its odour and by the alimentary matters coagulating albumen. In dogs poisoned by

* Christison, p. 806. Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 34, p. 214.

† Lancet, N. S., vol. 13, p. 902.

it, mucus was rapidly secreted in large quantities, and produced suffocation.*

It has been suggested that Dippel's oil, oil of tar, &c. owe their noxious power to the creosote contained in them.

Cyanuret of iodine. Orfila ranks this among the narcotico-acrid poisons in consequence of the experiments of Scoutetten. When it was given to dogs, convulsions almost instantly occurred, with immediate death. Half a grain was sufficient to destroy a rabbit, and five grains, a dog. The stomach was generally found somewhat inflamed.†

Lassaigne appears also to have experimented with it. One grain and a half given to a dog produced attempts to vomit, paralysis of the limbs, dilatation of the pupils and stiffness. Death succeeded at the end of fifteen minutes. The body was opened immediately. There was intense inflammation of the stomach, with an ulceration at the cardiac extremity. The upper part of the duodenum was also red.‡

The *cyanuret of bromine* would seem, from the experiments of Serrulas and Barthez, to be equally deleterious. One grain dissolved in water and given to a rabbit, instantly killed it.§

Other compounds of cyanogen possess deleterious qualities, and until their nature is better understood, they may also be arranged under this head.

Chloride of cyanogen. (Chlorocyanic acid.) Serullas, who first obtained this substance in a pure state, found it highly poisonous. A grain dissolved in alcohol and introduced into the œsophagus of a rabbit, killed it instantly. An ounce of water in which another grain had been agitated, destroyed a rabbit in twenty-five minutes.|| "It is corrosive to the skin, and highly injurious to animal life."¶

Cyanuret, or cyanide of potassium. A few grains placed on the tongue of a dog produced marks of inflammation. A

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 41, p. 248. London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 503.

† Orfila's Toxicologie, 3d edition, vol. 2, p. 344.

‡ London Medical Repository, vol. 24, p. 573, from Journal de Chimie Medicale.

§ Philosophical Magazine and Annals, vol. 1, p. 397. American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 3, p. 479.

|| Silliman's Journal, vol. 16, p. 258.

¶ Turner's Chemistry, 5th edition, p. 436.

tenth of a grain killed a linnet in sixty seconds, and less than one grain a Guinea pig in two or three minutes. These experiments were made by Robiquet and Villerme.* It has also proved poisonous when given as an enema; six grains *moistened*, but yet in a mass, being added to six ounces of water. The effects were strong convulsions, violent contractions of the limbs, and dilated pupils. The patient, however, recovered soon from these. A fourth enema was subsequently given, of the same ingredients, except that the cyanuret was *boiled in it, and so moist* that it adhered to the sides of the injection bag. No bad effects followed. A fifth was given in thirty-six hours after, with the same quantity of well dried cyanuret. Convulsions, difficult respiration and dilated pupils followed, and the patient died in an hour. The difference in effect is ascribed to the decomposition of the cyanuret by moisture.†

I have thrown in the following note a catalogue of such noxious plants and their products, unarranged in the various classes of poisons, as I have met with during the preparation of this work. Some are of our country, while others are foreign, and probably the majority belong to the narcotico-acrids.

Sanguinaria canadensis, L. (Blood root. Puccoon.) A native of the United States. This is considered by Dr. Bigelow as an acrid narcotic. A dose of from eight to twenty grains of the fresh powdered root, produces irritation of the fauces, heartburn, nausea, faintness and frequently vertigo and diminished vision. Vomiting is occasionally produced. (Bigelow's Medical Botany, vol. 1, p. 79.) Dr. Mease mentions on the authority of Dr. Muhlenberg, that a temporary insanity was induced in a female from swallowing the seeds. (Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 2, p. 161.) Professor Tully's elaborate essay on this plant will be found in the American Medical Recorder, vol. 13, p. 1. Professor Dana discovered an alkaloid in it, denominated *sanguinarine*.

Dirca palustris, L. (Swamp leather wood.) A native of this country. The berries are poisonous. (Rafinesque's Medical Flora, vol. 1, p. 160.) From its affinity to the genus *Daphne*, it is probably an acrid poison.

Chuilletia toxicaria, and *C. erecta*, Don. Mr. Don observes that these grow on the mountains of Sierra Leone. "The English name of the first species is *ratbane*. There is a deadly poison prepared from the kernel of the fruit by the negroes, which they use for the purpose of poisoning rats; whence its name." The kernels of the other species possess similar poisonous properties. (Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 11, p. 348.)

Robinia pseudo-acacia, L. Dr. Gendron of Montpelier, relates of some school boys who had chewed the bark of the root, and swallowed the juice, and in whom in three hours were presented symptoms of a narcotico-acrid poison, as vomiting, lethargy and slight convulsions. (Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6, p. 285.)

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 21, p. 494.

† Orfila in Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 11, p. 240. The case occurred to Dr. Trouvé.

Piscidia erythina, L. (Fish wood. Jamaica dogwood.) The bark is thrown into the water to intoxicate fish. Dr. Hamilton tried its effects on himself in the form of tincture. It produced some irritation, which was succeeded by profound sleep. (Burnett's Outlines of Botany, vol. 2, p. 654.)

Abrus precatorius, L. The scarlet seeds of this plant are used as necklaces and rosaries. It is the common opinion that they are poisonous. Indeed a single one swallowed by a child is said to have caused death. (Edinburgh Encyclopædia, vol. 15, p. 308, American edition. See also Ainslie's Materia Indica, vol. 2, p. 80, and Penny Magazine, vol. 2, p. 211.) Burnett, (Outlines, vol. 2, p. 666,) however, doubts this, and says that they are eaten in Egypt.

Hura crepitans, L. (Sand-box, Monkey's dinner bell,) so called from the noise of its capsules breaking. The seeds of this plant, according to Aublet, are poisonous. It vomits and purges in a dose of two grains. A native of Guiana. (Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 7, p. 200. Burnett's Outlines of Botany, vol. 2, p. 607.) Probably an acrid poison.

Anda gomesii, Jussieu. Grows in Brazil. The decoction of the bark is used by the natives for stupifying fish. An oil is obtained from the seeds, which is both cathartic and emetic. (Burnett, vol. 2, p. 609. F. Smith in Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 4, p. 26.)

Æsculus ohioensis, Michaux. *Æ. pallida*, Willdenow? (Buckeye.) Dr. Drake states that cattle are poisoned by eating the nuts. It induces gastritis, and they are previously affected with vertigo and trembling of the limbs. (Notes to Desalle, p. 9. Dr. Short in Transylvania Journal of Medicine, vol. 1, p. 422.) It is undoubtedly an acrid narcotic. See Riddell's Flora.

Æsculus pavia, L. *Pavia rubra*, Lam. (Buckeye.) "The narcotic property of this shrub has given rise to a singular mode of taking fish, practised, though not frequently, in some parts of this State. The tender branches are bruised, and thrown into a pool of small extent; the water is then agitated, until it becomes sufficiently impregnated to affect the fish; they rise to the surface almost lifeless, and may be taken by the hand. The powdered seed may be used with equal effect. Fish taken in this manner, are eaten with impunity." (Elliot's Botany of South-Carolina and Georgia, vol. 1, p. 435.)

Melia azederach, L. (Pride of China or India, Poison berry tree, China tree.) A native of the East, but also grows in our southern States. Elliot observes that its decoction is narcotic, and it was mentioned in the newspapers some time since, that a child had died from eating the seeds. Dr. Heustis remarks, that if exhibited in too large quantities, "it is highly poisonous, affecting more especially the head and eyes, and sometimes causing total blindness." (Elliot's Botany, vol. 1, p. 476. Barton's Materia Medica, part 1, p. 41. American Journal of Medical Sciences, vol. 8, p. 82. Ainslie's Materia Indica, vol. 2, p. 456. Dr. Griffith in Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 7, p. 180.)

Amyris toxicifolia, *toxisfera*, L.? (Janea, or White candle wood.) This is said to be a native of Carolina; and a black juice which distils from the trunk of this tree, is stated to be very poisonous. (Burnett's Outlines of Botany, vol. 2, p. 875.)

Polygala venenosa, Juss. A native of Java. Commerson says, "that even from gathering a few of its leaves and branches, he was attacked with giddiness, sickness, and other unpleasant symptoms." (Burnett's Medical Botany, vol. 2.)

Passiflora quadrangularis, L. (Barbadine.) A strong infusion of its root produced catalepsy and death in a dog; and on dissection, the arachnoid membrane was found injected, the vessels of the lungs all filled, and black blood in the heart. (Dr. Ricord Madianna in Annals of the New-York Lyceum, vol. 1, p. 129.) It is a native of the Isle of France, but cultivated in Guadaloupe. It is said to owe its activity to a peculiar principle, called *passiflorine*.

Chenopodium murale, L. (Wormseed.) A native of the southern States. Dr. Henry Wilkins, of Baltimore, states that he has known of two instances of children convulsed for an hour, from swallowing the seeds. (Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 5, p. 256.)

Gelsemium nitidum, Michaux. (Yellow jessamine. *Bignonia sempivirens*, L.) The flowers, root, &c. of this shrub are narcotic, and the effluvia from the former are said sometimes to induce stupor. Dr. Mease mentions that a child died in Charleston,

S. C. from eating the flowers. (Elliot's Botany of South-Carolina and Georgia, vol. 1, p. 312. Memoirs of the Philadelphia Agricultural Society, vol. 5, p. 244.) In the newspapers of May 1823, it is mentioned that a child of Mr. Broughton of North-Carolina, aged two years, died in the space of two hours, after eating the flowers of this plant. Blindness ensued within a minute or two after swallowing it. See Prof. Tully's Experiments, in Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 7, p. 117.

Kalmia latifolia, L. (Mountain laurel. Laurel in Pennsylvania, Bay in Virginia.) A native of the United States. Barton says that the Delawares (Indians) poison themselves with a decoction of this plant. It is poisonous to some animals, as cattle and sheep; and in man, a very small quantity of the decoction has produced vertigo and convulsions. (Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, part 1, p. 147. Barton's Materia Medica, part 1, p. 18. Bigelow's Med. Botany, vol. 1, p. 137, 139.)

Gualtheria procumbens, L. (Spicy winter-green,) and *Andromeda*, are allied genera to the *Kalmias*. In the Annals of Medicine, vol. 3, p. 364, is a case by Dr. Longmore, of a number of soldiers poisoned at Quebec, from a tea made of the *andromeda*, *gualtheria* and *sedum*. It produced vertigo, weakness, vomiting, cold sweats, and in one case insensibility. They gradually recovered, after extreme debility. See also Barton's Materia Medica, part 1, p. 19. Bees which feed on the azalea, rhododendron and *kalmia*, are supposed to produce poisonous honey.

Senecio obovatus, Willd. A native of this State. It is said to have proved a deadly poison to sheep. (Silliman's Journal, vol. 15, p. 358.)

Arnica montana, L. (Leopard's bane, Mountain tobacco.) Chevallier and Lassaigue have detected cytisine in it. (Duncan's Supplement, p. 27.)

Echites suberecta, Jacq. (Savanna flower of Jamaica.) According to Mr. Sells, two drachms of the expressed juice of this plant killed a dog. Animals and men have been destroyed by it. Some negroes attempted to poison an overseer by putting a quantity of the powdered root into water intended for drinking, but it was detected. Six grains of this powdered root were given to a dog, who died in less than three hours. (Brande's Journal, N. S. vol. 3, p. 502.)

Spigelia marilandica, L. (Pink root.) A native of the United States. This, in large doses, is a violent poison. Its decoction produced vertigo, dimness of sight, and pain, in two children who took it; one vomited, but was not relieved; staggering, incoherent talking, and delirium took place, until they fell asleep; they awoke relieved. The pupils were dilated during the influence of the poison. Dr. Chalmers attributes the loss of two children who died in convulsions, to this article. (Edinburgh Physical and Literary Essays, vol. 1, p. 438, Dr. Lining. Ibid. vol. 3, p. 149, Dr. Garden. Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, part 2, p. 74. Dr. W. P. Barton's Medical Botany, vol. 2, p. 80. Bigelow's Medical Botany, vol. 1, p. 146.)

Hemanthus toxicarius, Aiton. (The old *Amaryllis toxicaria*, or *distacha*.) is the plant with which it is said the Hottentots poison their arrows. Weapons wetted with the juice of the bulb, convey certain death by the slightest wound: dissolution is preceded by violent struggles and efforts to vomit. (Baruett's Outlines of Botany, vol. 1, p. 448.)

Amaryllis atamasco, L. (Atamasco lilly, Stagger grass.) Southern States. Generally supposed to be poisonous to cattle, and to produce the disease in calves called *staggers*. (Elliot's Botany of South-Carolina and Georgia, vol. 1, p. 384.)

Helonias erythrosperma, Mich. (Red-seeded helonias, Fly poison.) Southern States. This plant is a narcotic poison, and is employed in some families for destroying the house fly. It is mixed with honey or molasses. The flies, unless swept into the fire or otherwise destroyed, revive in the course of twenty-four hours. (Elliot's Botany of South-Carolina and Georgia, vol. 1, p. 421.) Dr. Tully has experimented on this. (Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 1, p. 136.)

Caladium seguinum, Vent. I add this on the authority of some remarks extracted from Hooker's Exotic Flora. This plant is a native of the West Indies, and is there called *dumb cane*, from the fact that its virulent juice, when applied to the tongue, causes a swelling which deprives the sufferer of the power of speech. From its affinity to the genus *Arum*, it is probably an acrid poison. The *Caladium arborescens* is so caustic, that occasionally (says Merat) the lips of negroes are wetted with it, as a punishment for slight misdemeanours. (Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. 7,

p. 395. Coxe's Medical Museum, vol. 1, p. 185. Burnett's Outlines of Botany, vol. 1, p. 411.)

Symplocarpus foetida, Salisbury. *Ictodes foetidus*, Bigelow. (Skunk cabbage.) A native of the United States. This plant emits a very pungent odour from the spathe and flower. Dr. Barton was seized with inflammation of the eyes, in consequence of the necessary examination which he gave to it. A dose of thirty grains of the root has caused vomiting, headach, vertigo, and temporary blindness. (Dr. W. P. Barton's Medical Botany, Art. *Symplocarpus*. Bigelow's Medical Botany, vol. 2, p. 48.)

Equisetum hyemale, L. (Scour grass.) A native of the United States. I formerly placed this among the irritant poisons, but I am now convinced that its noxious qualities are owing to the silex contained in it. According to the analysis of Braconnot, out of the ashes furnished by the dried plant, more than half is silex. There is no question that horses and cattle are sometimes destroyed from eating it; and on examination, the stomach is found cut and lacerated. (Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, vol. 8, p. 101. Barton's Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1, part 1, p. 149. Nuttall's Journey in the Arkansas, p. 58.)

Oil of tansy, (Tanacetum vulgare, L.) A female, aged twenty-seven, in Boston, took half an ounce. Spasms ensued, and although emetics and the stomach pump were used, she died in two hours. On dissection, a strong odour of tansy was perceived; the blood was dark and thick; the stomach and intestines were healthy. (Case by Dr. Hildreth, Boston Medical Magazine, vol. 3, p. 213.) Dr. Daniel Drake mentions, that within the year 1833, two persons (both young women) have died in Cincinnati, from the distilled oil of tansy. One took it by mistake; the other was probably a suicide. (Western Journal of Medical and Physical Sciences, vol. 7, p. 569.)

Oil of wintergreen, (Gaultheria procumbens, L.) An individual in New-York was supposed to be poisoned by this, in 1832. He had been intemperate, but was not otherwise disordered. Death ensued in fourteen hours; and on dissection, marks of inflammation in the stomach were seen. Probably a fluid ounce had been taken. — (Philadelphia Journal of Pharmacy, vol. 6, p. 289.)

Oil of cedar. An individual at Saratoga Springs died in convulsions, about half an hour after taking some of this.

COMPOUND POISONING.

It is to be expected, that when two poisons of different or opposite properties have been taken, their effects will vary materially from those produced by either singly. The known facts on this subject, however, consist at present only of individual cases, and I will mention some of the more important.

Arsenic and Corrosive sublimate. An individual took about fifty grains of each, mixed together, for the purpose of suicide; but experiencing a burning heat in his bowels in about five minutes, took an emetic, which caused him to evacuate a portion of the poison. Excruciating pain and severe thirst were present. By the aid of emetics and diluents he became somewhat relieved. A diarrhœa ensued, which lasted eight days. On the second day, besides this, vomiting recurred, with convulsive twitchings. The treatment was directed to the removal of inflammation. Under this he improved, but was delirious a portion of the time. On the sixth day, mer-

curial ptyalism commenced, and although extremely weak, the immediately dangerous symptoms subsided, and he gradually, but slowly, convalesced.*

Arsenic and laudanum. Mr. Jennings relates a case, where a female swallowed two drachms of arsenic and three ounces of laudanum at the same time. He saw her in four hours after. There was no pain or burning in the throat, stomach or bowels; no tenderness of the abdomen, and no particular stupor. She complained merely of being tired and sleepy, from the violent effects of an emetic about two hours previously. The eyes were bloodshot and heavy, the pupils contracted, and the pulse 100. All the usual symptoms of arsenic were absent. An emetic, venesection, leeches, blistering, and the cold effusion were prescribed, and she was kept walking; but the drowsiness increased, and she finally became comatose, and died in that state, with dilated pupils and laborious breathing, about nine hours after taking the poison. There had been no pain in the stomach, and the bowels were but once moved.

On dissection, the membranes of the brain were found vascular, the sinuses gorged, the large veins filled with a treacly-like blood, the ventricles free of fluid, the brain firm, and its bloody points unusually numerous. The stomach was externally healthy. It contained half a pint of fluid. Its villous coat was generally pale, but at the great arch there were two small red patches. The small intestines were red, and some had patches. The heart was rather flaccid, and its great vessels were not gorged with blood. Arsenic was obtained from the fluids of the stomach.†

Arsenic and alcohol. Two cases of this description are mentioned by Dr. Christison. In one, the arsenic was taken after a meal. After ineffectual attempts to produce vomiting by emetics, the stomach pump was used, and a fluid brought up in which arsenic was detected; but no symptom of arsenical poisoning followed. Dr. Christison imagines that the opera-

* Julia Fontanelle, in Archives Generales. Medico-Chir. Review, vol. 7, p. 565.

† Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 35, p. 453, from London Medical and Physical Journal, October, 1830. There is another case by Mr. Scott, in which the effects of the arsenic decidedly predominated, and the mucous membrane of the stomach was readily detached, after death. (Medico-Chir. Review, vol. 11, p. 170.)

tion of it was prevented by the narcotism previously induced by the ardent spirits. In the other instance related by Dr. Wood of Dumfries, where half an ounce of arsenic was taken early in the morning, after a night's debauch, there was no symptom, but langour and drowsiness. A few minutes afterwards, he had slight vomiting, which was repeatedly renewed. In eighteen hours, he presented the usual constitutional symptoms of poisoning with arsenic, and in forty-one hours, he expired. But from first to last he had scarcely any local symptom, except vomiting, although the stomach presented, after death, signs of violent irritation.*

Corrosive sublimate and laudanum. Two drachms of the former, and half an ounce of the latter, were swallowed by a young soldier at Edinburgh. He had at first no violent symptoms whatever indicating the operation of corrosive sublimate, but afterwards suffered under purging, tenesmus, and bloody stools. There was, however, no pain or tenderness of the abdomen. On the fourth day, a violent salivation commenced, and under this and the dysentery, he sunk; yet not so much but that on the day of his death, the ninth day after he took the poison, he was able to walk a little in his room without assistance. The stomach and intestines were enormously inflamed, ulcerated, and here and there almost gangrenous. Dr. Christison, who received this case from Dr. Mackintosh, imagines that the narcotic operation of the opium retarded the irritant action of the corrosive sublimate.†

Tartar emetic and charcoal fumes. An individual, after swallowing 17 grains of the former, attempted to commit suicide by suffocating himself with the fumes of burning charcoal. He recovered from both attempts; suffered severely from the usual narcotic effects of carbonic acid gas, but showed scarcely any of the symptoms of the action of tartar emetic.

Opium and belladonna. The lady of a medical man took successively three injections, each containing a scruple of opium and half an ounce of the leaves of belladonna. They were all returned. This was in the evening. During the night, her husband became alarmed at her profound sleep, and

* Christison, p. 308.

† Ibid. p. 309.

sent for aid. The pupils were extremely dilated, the tongue dry, deglutition difficult, respiration short and frequent, and the pulse 130. The limbs were perfectly motionless, and the skin insensible to irritation. Purgatives, venesection and sinapisms were used with success, but the vision remained indistinct for the next day.*

Laudanum and alcohol. The excitement of intoxication sometimes suspends for a time the action of laudanum, but the symptoms of stupor then occur. In one instance, seen by Dr. Christison, there was no delay, and the narcotism came on in one hour, and death succeeded in four more.†

Orfila has published an elaborate memoir on the detection of mixed poisons. I can only mention a few of his formulæ.

Mixture of corrosive sublimate and arsenious acid. These are separated by adding sulphuric ether, and shaking the mixture until the sublimate is dissolved. The liquor is then evaporated to obtain it. This will apply, whether the mixture be in the solid or fluid state.

Corrosive sublimate and acetate of copper. Here also ether is to be used as in the last, the acetate not being soluble in it.

Corrosive sublimate and tartar emetic, the same process.

Arsenious acid and tartar emetic. Boil the mixture with carbonate of potash. Soluble arsenite and tartrate of potash, and oxide of antimony will be obtained. The latter is soluble in hydrochloric acid, affording hydrochlorate of antimony. Treat the fluid with sulphuretted hydrogen and a few drops of hydrochloric acid, and sulphuret of arsenic will be precipitated.

Laudanum and arsenious acid. Filter and apply sulphuretted hydrogen. The laudanum dissolves only a small portion of the acid.‡

* *Medico-Chirurgical Review.* vol. 17, p. 563.

† Christison, p. 309.

‡ The Memoir of Orfila may be found in the *Annales D'Hygiène*, vol. 7, p. 627; and an Analysis of it, in *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 11, p. 179.

CHAPTER XXII.

MEDICAL EVIDENCE.

Why physicians are called as witnesses ; statutory regulations on this in various countries. Duties of the medical witness before the coroner and his jury. Neglect of medico-legal examinations. Capacity of all medical men to be witnesses. Necessity of the appointment of medico-legal examiners by the State. Regulations in Austria—Prussia, practical school of legal medicine in the latter country. Defects of the present system in England and the United States ; duties of medical men while it remains in force. Medical witnesses before a court ; rules for their conduct in the statement of facts—in giving opinions. Fluctuations of opinion on several subjects of importance—hydrostatic test in infanticide. The witness to avoid being a partizan. Testimony to be estimated according to the skill and knowledge of the witness. Difference of opinion ; rule on this in the Scotch courts ; a reference to authorities proper. Witness obliged to divulge secrets. Validity of deathbed declarations.

No treatise on Medical Jurisprudence is complete at the present day, unless it embraces some remarks on Medical Evidence ; but I confess that I do not approach the subject with the same alacrity that I have done others, and principally from a conviction that what I may say or offer will pass unheeded by those to whom it is principally addressed. I refer to our lawgivers, with whom alone it remains to give a new and proper impulse to the science of medical jurisprudence, and to make that infinitely more available to the ends of justice and the prevention of crime than it has ever yet been in this country.*

The duties of the physician or surgeon are not bounded by his responsible and interesting attendance on the sick. He is often called upon to exercise other functions. His opinion is desired in cases of sudden death—of grievous bodily or mental injury—or on the nature of particular diseases and affections. This, indeed, is the natural result of a proper regard for the

* Many of the remarks in this chapter are taken from the Annual Address delivered before the State Medical Society in 1828, when I was honoured with the office of president.

interests of society. Whenever the importance of equal laws becomes fully recognized in a country, and the necessity of distributing impartial justice fully understood, it will soon suggest itself to the legislator, that if evidence is required, it should be of the most unexceptionable and satisfactory nature. When the controversy originated in mercantile disputes, the opinions of merchants were of course sought for and depended on, and their customs and usages have indeed become a part of the statutes of various countries. So also when unexpected death followed from known or supposed injury—when the suspicion of violence entered into the list of causes, it was natural, that sooner or later, those should be called upon to examine and testify, whose ordinary studies and pursuits best enabled them to decide. We find that it is now three centuries since a formal enactment in a European code recognized this principle. The Emperor Charles the Fifth, (as I have already stated in the Introduction,) in the celebrated Criminal Code framed by him at Ratisbon in 1532, ordained that the opinion of medical men should be taken in every case where death had been occasioned by violent means; such as child murder, poisoning, wounds, hanging, drowning, and the like. France and other continental states soon followed this example, and improved upon its directions. In England, the country from which we derive our laws, I believe I may say with perfect accuracy, that no statutory provision on the subject is to be found. Custom, however, and sometimes legal dicta have sanctioned what the necessity of the case has rendered imperious—an appeal to medical testimony.* The same remarks may, to a great extent, be applied to our country; and it is to be regretted that in both, the qualifications for the office of coroner are so little regarded. It would seem indispensable that he be properly versed both in the legal and medical knowledge required from time to time in the discharge

* “It is the duty of a coroner, in a case of death in a pugilistic encounter, to examine a surgeon as to the cause of death.” (Rex v. Quinch, 4 Carrington and Payne’s Reports, 571.) But again: A woman was wounded by a stone, and taken to the hospital in Dublin. The mayor required a certificate from the surgeon in attendance, as to her state. This was refused, unless a fee was paid. The mayor appealed to the government, and was informed by Mr. Stanley (Dublin Castle, Nov. 13, 1832,) that no law obliges the surgeon of an infirmary to give an opinion in such a case.—(London Medical Gazette, vol. 11, p. 264.)

of his office.* It cannot be denied, that a full and satisfactory medico-legal examination is avoided as often as public sentiment will permit; and even when judicially ordered, its proper objects are often thwarted, or not fully accomplished. The consequences may be seen in the result of many of our criminal trials. The public mind may be deeply and permanently impressed with the guilt of individuals, yet the imperfection of the early examination has been such as to leave no option to the jury but to release the accused.

In cases of violent death, and these are the most important as well as the most common, in which professional witnesses are summoned, their duties may be considered under two divisions—first, before the coroner's inquest; and secondly, before the court and jury that is to try the supposed criminal. In other words, the facts that are to govern are elicited before the former; while before the latter, these facts are to be stated, and opinions are to be advanced, which frequently decide the fate of the accusation. This is the ordinary course of judicial proceeding, though of course it is often necessary to pronounce an opinion even before a coroner's jury, but with the important distinction that its merits and weight are there seldom canvassed.

As to the first of these divisions, we may observe that it enters into the very essence of the duties of the coroner, and those of the jury whom he summons to *view the body*. He is to inquire into the causes which have produced the supposed violent termination of life, and if the injury be manifest, to ascertain its nature and the probable instrument used to effect it. It is in the discharge of this function that he *may* summon any medical man before him as a witness, and our own state law says he *shall* do it. It proceeds, however, no farther, nor does it establish any regulations as to examinations, or the compensation for them.† The result necessarily must be, a

* See vol. 2, p. 2. I do not mean by these remarks to urge that the coroner should always be a medical man, any more than that he should be a lawyer; but I contend for such a degree of knowledge as will enable him to aid the medical examiner in his duties, and at the same time properly direct the jury.

† In a letter from Mr. Aaron, surgeon of Birmingham, it is stated that it seems to be the legal opinion that a coroner cannot oblige a surgeon to open a body and give evidence thereon; but that a surgeon having examined a body at the coroner's re-

degree of carelessness and hurry which can only tend to favour the escape of a guilty person.

In Austria, though a despotic country, this subject is far better arranged. "A code of regulations is published, by which all medico-judiciary inspections are to be conducted throughout the empire, and reports to be drawn up. Public inspections are also made on the dead bodies of those found in suspicious circumstances, and which not being at first recognized, are carried to the dead room of the general hospital. Due notice is given to the students at what hour such inspections are to take place, and they have thus an opportunity of seeing those regulations put in practice, which they themselves will one day be called to fulfil."*

The medical witness when summoned, should satisfy himself as to the *cause of death*. He should proceed to a dissection if he entertains the slightest doubt, and he has the right to demand this, or as an alternative, to deny his testimony. If this be properly understood, the doubt that some have advanced, whether in law, it is *imperative* on the coroner to have the body opened, is of little importance.† At the present day physicians at least need not to be told that an external view alone of the body is perfectly nugatory, and that it can lead to no certain deduction, and that a jury is quite as competent to form an opinion upon it as many practitioners. The jury is sworn "diligently to inquire and true presentment make," *how and in what manner*, the deceased came to his death. Let the medical witness, when subpœnaed, impress this on the coroner and his jury, and decline any testimony unless he be permitted to satisfy his own mind and conscience.‡

quest or not, and coming before him, may be committed for contempt if he refuse to answer. (London Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 6, p. 22.)

* Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery, vol. 1, p. 40.

† London Medical Repository, vol. 24, p. 578. Medico-Chirurgical Review, vol. 6, p. 562.

‡ "We cannot omit this opportunity of expressing our disapprobation of the conduct of coroners who presume to interrupt the medical practitioner called upon to examine the cause of death under suspicious circumstances; and of informing practitioners in general, that as soon as the body is delivered over to them for that purpose, they are to proceed deliberately with their examination until they be satisfied. Upon this subject, we quote with great satisfaction, the opinion of the enlightened judge who now presides over the criminal court of this division of the empire. Dr. Cleg-

The duties demanded of him cannot be satisfactorily or conscientiously discharged without competent knowledge. An acquaintance with anatomy is indispensably necessary, and peculiarly so in those interesting cases where it is necessary to distinguish the effects of disease or violence from ordinary appearances. Unless well grounded in that science, the phenomena that follow natural death may be mistaken for the effects of poison, or the consequences of severe injury. Anatomy, then, both physiological and pathological, must be applied to the case. Nor is this always sufficient. If the question of poisoning be agitated, chemistry is required to lend its aid; and if it be a case involving the presence of pregnancy or delivery, the knowledge of the man midwife will be necessary.

Now the just application of all this must not be evaded. The members of our profession in every part of the country are liable to be summoned, and that on the shortest notice, to take a part in such an investigation. Are they all qualified to do justice to it? Am I doing them a wrong in saying that they are not? Medical men are constantly engaged in a most laborious and engrossing occupation, and after obtaining their education, their opportunities for pursuing practical anatomy are extremely narrow. Indeed, the prejudices of the community, strengthened by the restrictions and penalties of our laws, render it almost impracticable to do more than preserve their early information. The accessory sciences also are only cultivated by a few. Does it not then appear that a duty is required, which in many cases should rather be avoided? I am still confining myself to the preliminary investigation before a coroner, and need only allude to the additional force of these observations, when the examiner is transferred to the stand of the witness, and subjected to the inquiries of the bar and the court. How often is a fair reputation and great social worth tarnished by such an event? And would not all

horn of Glasgow, having been examined in a trial for poison, the Lord Justice Clerk, after highly complimenting the learned professor on his luminous evidence, *took occasion to impress strongly on all magistrates and public officers present, the absolute necessity of having the body of the deceased opened and examined by a medical man, in every case of suspicious death.*" (Edinburgh Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 14, p. 468.)

prefer having some regulations adopted, by which the liability to these appeals may be avoided?*

I have no novel proposition to offer on this subject. It is one that has been sanctioned by the experience of several continental countries, and has certainly led to the distribution of equal justice. It has done more. In the opinion of competent judges, it has led to the diminution of crimes, evidently from a certainty of their detection. I refer to the appointment of medical men in a county, a district, or a part of the state, who shall be specially charged with this duty.

The germ of this regulation appears in the German code, to which I have already referred. It has for centuries been the practice in Austria to appoint individuals to superintend these examinations and to report on them. In 1606, Henry the Fourth of France, gave letters patent to his first physician, by which he conferred on him the power of appointing two surgeons in every city or important town, whose duty it should exclusively be to examine all wounded or murdered persons, and to report thereon. It was soon discovered that in many instances the investigation would be incomplete, unless physicians were associated with them, and accordingly in 1692, this was ordained by the council of state.† The form of the reports to be made by them, and the circumstances to be noticed, make a part of every work now published on the continent, concerning legal medicine.

Dr. William Cummin has recently favoured us with an account of the duties at present required of such an officer, (Kries and Stad Physiker, as he is there styled,) in Prussia.

“He shall bestow (these are the words of his commission) his especial attention on the salubrity of the district committed to his charge. As soon as any symptoms of contagious or epidemic disorders are discerned, he shall promptly adopt the speediest measures that prudence suggests, and apprise the boards whom such events chiefly concern. He shall comply with the laws of the medical profession, and strenuously see that they be complied with by others. He shall further,

* The fact cannot be too distinctly stated, that a man may be a *judicious, correct and excellent practitioner of medicine, and yet not competent as a witness.*

† Fode.é, Introduction, vol. 1, p. xxxii.

when called upon by the government board, superintend the treatment of the sick poor, and take a fair share of the business of the medical police of his district generally. Upon all occasions, when called upon, he shall be ready to engage in the *post mortem* examinations which devolve upon him, and in the medico-legal investigations relative to lesions and injuries to living persons, and concerning the state of mind and body of individuals submitted to his scrutiny, giving a deliberate judgment in each case. He shall also devote particular regard to the progress of vaccination. All this, as well as all other business confided to him by the proper authorities, he shall perform cheerfully. And, in fine, in all his official relations, he shall so conduct himself as a faithful and diligent *Kreisphysikus* should and ought to do.”*

A practical school of legal medicine has, as a necessary consequence, arisen from these regulations. It is attached to the University of Berlin, and was opened in the summer session of 1833. From a report of Dr. Wagner, who is at its head, some idea of its value may be obtained.

“The mode of teaching pursued is as follows: At different hours of the day, according to the matter presented, each student is admitted in his turn to look into the cases of living subjects, to perform judicial *post mortem* examinations, and to analyze inorganic and inanimate substances; after which, he is required to make a report on what has been submitted to him, in the same style as the district physician does. Moreover, the physician meets the student twice in the week, either for the purpose of explaining and discussing the facts already observed, or to distribute new cases among them, or lastly, to refute or pass judgment upon the reports that have been presented to them.

The students are exercised in the proper mode of examining adult and infantile corpses, and every one is aware how much practice and skill is requisite to appreciate the pulmonary docimasia of the latter. Every six months, a course is delivered on the modes of testing the presence of poisons, both

* London Medical Gazette, vol. 13, p. 952.

mineral and vegetable, and these modes the students practise."*

The advantage of designating individuals for the particular duty of medico-legal examination, would thus seem to be striking and prominent. It would lead to more accurate study of the science. It would afford numerous and favourable opportunities of improving it. It would in a great degree prevent that disputation about facts, which produces so many unpleasant collisions in courts of justice, and above all, it would spare to many the performance of the most unpleasant duties, often amidst the circle of their practice, and hence liable to injure its extent or impair its usefulness.

Indeed, we have only to look at the practical operation of the present system, to be conscious of its manifold imperfections. In France, where in consequence of the overthrow of social relations by the Revolution, the medical profession was completely remodelled, and many imperfectly educated persons, under the name of *officers of health*, were introduced, to supply the wants of the armies as well as of civil life, great difficulties are experienced and heavy complaints made. Collard de Martigny, in a series of observations on the subject, has demonstrated the extreme ignorance of many who appear as witnesses, either on anatomical or chemical investigations, and he justly ascribes this to an imperfect knowledge of legal medicine.† In a case of supposed abortion, before a coroner's jury in London, in 1829, a medical practitioner testified that the fullness of the breasts attendant on impregnation was the consequence of powerful medicines; that the natural openings of ducts about the os uteri, were punctures, and finally, that the gall bladder was filled with *florid bile*. And for all

* London Medical and Surgical Journal, (by Dr. Ryan,) vol. 7, p. 442. During the first year of its establishment, (from July, 1833, to 1834,) the practical school of legal medicine has been attended by 63 students, some of whom are already in practice. The course of instruction has comprehended 253 medico-legal questions, 217 of which refer to living individuals, and 32 to dead subjects, (judicial post mortem examinations,) and four required the analysis of inorganic substances.

The inquiries made in the cases of the living individuals turned, in 133 instances, upon the state of the body, and in 34, upon that of the mind. Of the latter, 27 were civil cases and 7 criminal.

† Annales D'Hygiène, vol. 7, p. 160, vol. 10., p. 115.

this, the coroner's jury voted him their thanks.* Similar instances might be quoted on this side of the Atlantic.

"When (say the editors of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*,) we read of coroners in England, in cases of suspected murder, directing the examining surgeon to be contented with the external inspection of the body, from the vulgar prejudice against dissection; when we are told of sheriffs in Scotland, holding the opening of a body supposed to be poisoned with arsenic, as unnecessary, and incapable of furnishing additional proof; when we know that professional men neglect to ascertain the cause of death, because they received no compulsory order to that effect—we must be satisfied, that the only means of learning the truth exactly where it is most desirable, are often culpably neglected."

"But the instances in which its discovery is presented by presumption and ignorance, on the part of those who undertake such an examination, are still more numerous. We every day hear of medical practitioners giving their evidence with the utmost confidence on points which it is obvious they never considered with the requisite attention, stating facts as universal which admit of many exceptions and modifications, or rejecting them altogether, because exceptions do exist, and destroying evidence or failing to discover it, from not knowing where it is to be found, nor how it is to be obtained. On the other hand, we sometimes see well informed medical men brow beat and baffled, from not knowing the estimation and respect they were entitled to claim for their opinion and skill. These evils can only be removed, gradually, by convincing the public and the profession of the great importance to society of the study of juridical medicine."†

* *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 4, p. 517, from the *London Medical Gazette*.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 14, p. 111. Review of Male and Bartley.

"It is impossible to resist the wish that special qualifications were required by law on the part of medical witnesses. There is something of this nature on the continent, and though one of the last of my countrymen who would wish to see the customs and institutions of Great Britain shaped according to foreign patterns, yet I think we might in some matters take a hint from and improve upon their practice." *Dr. Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence*, p. 103.

See also Marc, in his preface to Rose, p. xvii. He urges that to every city and district a physician and surgeon should be assigned, who have made legal medicine

All these remarks, however, only go to show the imperfections and faults of the present system. Medical men, until it be altered, have to act under it. Let me urge them, in no case to omit a medico-legal examination, where the cause of death is the subject to be decided; and in order to perform this duty with deliberation and accuracy, it is of the greatest importance that two or more professional persons should be associated together. They will assist each other not merely mechanically, but by suggesting various points of inquiry. While he who is most skilled in anatomy is pursuing his dissection, the other may note the appearances as they successively present themselves. And the same course may be adopted while performing chemical experiments. The advantage will thus be attained, of having a complete statement of *facts* prepared at the moment of observation, which may be afterwards reviewed both in coming to a decision on the case, and in giving evidence before a jury.

Chaussier, in a memoir read before the academy of Dijon as far back as 1789, insisted earnestly on the benefits of such a legal arrangement. He proposed that the report should be written on the spot, remarking that although the opinions to be deduced may require some reflection, yet the narrative of actual appearances needs none. He further proposed that this report should be filed in the clerk's office within twenty hours for the examination of a chamber of verification; and if disapproved by them, that the judge should cause a second visitation to be made by others. But if approved, that it should be received on the trial as a true account of the facts observed.*

A somewhat similar course is pursued in Scotland. Medical men are appointed to examine, and they make reports. The use made of these will be seen in the following extract from Alison. "Medical or other scientific reports which are lodged in process before the trial, and libelled on as produc-

their particular study. This will not, he adds, exclude others from pursuing it. Indeed, it may be the means of prompting many who otherwise would neglect it, and who are contented with the indifference and want of knowledge that prevails, because it is general.

* Chaussier's *Observations Chirurgico-légales sur un point important de la Jurisprudence Criminelle*, &c. Dijon, 1790.

tions in the indictment, are allowed to be *read* as a deposition to the jury, confirming it at its close by a declaration on his oath, that it is a true report. The reason of this is, that the facts are often so minute and detailed, that they cannot safely be entrusted to the memory. The witness is, however, liable to an examination and cross examination.”*

A full statement of facts being prepared, it next becomes the duty of the witness to express an opinion on them before the coroner's jury. That this must be the result of due consideration, I need hardly insist. If it be an unfavorable one, it may consign an individual for months to a prison, and heap on him the imputation of the most horrid crimes. How necessary then is it that the decision be strongly fortified by facts and by authority.

When the examination before the coroner is completed and the charge of guilt is made, the duties of the medical witness have but just commenced. He has to appear before another tribunal, to state the facts noticed, the opinion deduced from these facts, and the reasons for that opinion. He may, and indeed frequently is, called upon to defend them against the objections of other medical witnesses, and above all, he has to undergo a severe and minute inquiry by gentlemen of the bar, whose business it is to invalidate, if possible, all that he has said.

This branch of our subject cannot be approached without advertng with some feelings of professional pride to the certainty which has been attained in many branches of medical jurisprudence. It is surely no mean effort of human skill to be brought to a dead body, disinterred perhaps after it has lain for months, or even years in the grave; to examine its morbid condition; to analyze the fluids contained in it; (often in the smallest possible quantities,) and from a course of deductions founded in the strictest logic, to pronounce an opinion, which combined circumstances, or the confession of the criminal, prove to be correct.† And this, if properly done,

* Alison's Practice of the Criminal Law of Scotland, p. 541.

† “It is such duties ably performed, that raise our profession to an exalted rank in the eyes of the world; that cause the vulgar, who are ever ready to exclaim against the inutility of medicine, to marvel at the mysterious power by which an atom of

must be accomplished without listening to rumour, and without permitting prejudice to operate. Many, again, by their researches, have saved the innocent, showing that accidental or natural causes have produced all the phenomena.

The first point worthy of recommendation is the importance of stating the facts observed, in plain and perspicuous language. The use of technical terms is often unavoidable, and precision and accuracy must be sacrificed if they be not adopted: but there is a medium in all this. Many parts can be named by their common appellation, and the appearances observed designated by words in ordinary use. The imputation of pedantry is thus avoided, and every aid is given to a clear understanding of the case. The doctrine founded on the facts should next be mentioned in an unequivocal manner, so as at once to evince the decided belief of the witness in it, and the reasons on which it is established. If it be open to doubt, he should intimate this, and also the reasons for it, before they are drawn out by a cross examination.*

The inattention paid to medical opinion on one of the most important subjects in the science, is such as to demand a more extended reference to it. I refer to the proof of infanticide.

It is evident that the charge cannot be brought, unless it be previously ascertained that the child was born alive. For several centuries, a decisive proof of this was supposed to be

arsenic, mingled amidst a mass of confused ingesta can still be detected. It does more: it impresses on the minds of assassins, who resort to poison, a salutary dread of the great impossibility of escaping discovery." (*Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine and Surgery*, vol. 4, p. 45.)

* "Be the plainest men in the world (said Sir William Blizard, some years since, to his pupils,) in a court of justice; never harbour a thought, that if you do not appear positive you must appear little and mean ever after; many old practitioners have erred in this respect. Give your evidence in as concise, plain and yet clear a manner as possible; be intelligent, candid, open and just, never aiming at appearing unnecessarily scientific; state all the sources by which you have gained your information. If you can, make your evidence a self-evident truth; thus, though the court may at the time have too good or too mean an opinion of your judgment, yet they must deem you an honest man; never then be dogmatic, or set yourselves up for judge and jury; take no side whatever, be impartial and you will be honest. In courts of judicature, you will frequently hear the counsellors complain when a surgeon gives his opinion with any the least kind of doubt, that he does not speak clearly; but if he is loud and positive, if he is technical and dogmatic, then he is allowed to be clear and right. I am sorry to have it to observe, that this is too frequently the case." (*London Medical and Physical Journal*, vol. 21, p. 403.)

attained in the various phenomena exhibited by the lungs, and particularly their floating in water. No subject has been so thoroughly examined by means of experiments as this. But it was the bad fortune of the hydrostatic test (as it is called) to find an enemy in the late Dr. William Hunter, a man of the greatest eminence in his profession, of no mean talents independent of his professional acquirements, and gifted with a fascinating mode of explaining and enforcing his opinions. He formed an idea that too implicit a reliance on this test might lead to error; that many circumstances might occur to weaken its value, and indeed that other causes besides respiration, might produce the particular sign that was deemed indicative of independent life. The melancholy situation of those who were most liable to be charged with the crime of child murder, gave an adventitious weight to his objections, and they formed the theme of every advocate for the unfortunate female who had fallen from virtue.

In themselves, they are worthy of due consideration, and on the continent, though not altogether original to its students, they led to new investigations, by applying which, all the causes of fallacy might be avoided, while subsidiary proofs were furnished, strengthening the primary and leading one. This, however, seemed to have but little influence in England. Few men dared in the infancy of legal medicine, to question the opinions of Dr. Hunter, and though he evidently had paid little attention to the point experimentally, yet his dictum was quoted as the standard of medical science. In process of time, some of the barristers of that day, have ascended the bench, and carrying with them the ideas acquired at the bar, have on many occasions, denounced the hydrostatic test. Barron Garrow some years since, at the Worcester assizes, congratulated a grand jury, that that *scientific humbug*, as he styled it, was abandoned. Nothing, he added, could be more fallacious.* Justice Littledale, in a late trial, told the medical witness: "You do not appear old enough to have seen the late Dr. Hunter, but you must know

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 450. Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence, p. 46.

that he was one of the most celebrated surgeons of this country, and that he asserted that no dependence was to be placed on the test you rely on." It was answered, "I am aware that was his opinion, but I entertain a different one, and I believe mine is now the received theory among medical men." "Then it must be (said Justice Littledale) within the last year or two if it is, for I have heard some of the most eminent of them deny it." And so is the fact. Physicians are not sufficiently firm in expressing their sentiments. They are too apt to yield to the decisive tone that is adopted, and permit doubts to escape them, when those doubts should apply only to the proper performance of the test, or to adventitious circumstances impairing its certainty.*

All this, however, cannot shake the validity of the test. It is founded on physiological principles, deduced from the broad and wide distinctions that exist between fœtal and independent life. Its prominent proof is strengthened by numerous accessory ones, such as the changes in the heart and large blood-

* In a case tried at the Essex assizes in March, 1820, where the circumstances were evidently extremely suspicious, and where the lungs were found to float, the counsel for the prosecution, the surgeon who examined them, and the judge on the bench, all agreed that it was a fallacious test. The judge (the Chief Baron) said there was no proof that the child was born alive. Again, in a case tried in Scotland, three medical witnesses, *who had not seen the body*, were examined for the prisoner, and all of these gentlemen agreed, that if the child had been dead for the period of eleven days, it was impossible for any medical man to come to a conclusion as to whether the child had been alive at the time of birth. (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 21, p. 231.) The remarks of the journalist on this subject are so pertinent that I cannot forbear quoting them. "The more we turn our attention to the subject, the firmer is our conviction, and in this conviction, we are borne out by every one of the few persons in this country entitled to the name of medical jurists, that to procure a satisfactory and irrefragable opinion in cases of infanticide and in all other difficult medico-legal questions, it is only requisite to submit the matter to a dispassionate and skillful investigation. Those little acquainted with medical jurisprudence, whether professional or unprofessional, universally confound together *doubt* and *difficulty*. The question involved in the trial, must be allowed to be almost always difficult, but we are certain, that when properly examined, scarcely one instance in a hundred will prove doubtful."

I add the following extraordinary case, to show how far judicial interference has been carried. The infant was found dead in a box, with several wounds on its neck and breast, and marks of injury to the skull. The lungs were distended with air, and they, with the heart attached, floated in water. The mother had been delivered alone a few hours previous, but denied it. On the trial, the medical witness, Dr. Robinson of Bridport, was not allowed him to state his experiments on the lungs, and the judge (Baron Garrow) interrupted the counsel for the prosecution to state to him that the test was a vulgar error. (London Medical Repository, vol. 22, p. 347.)

vessels, and the appearances observed in the various viscera.* The common sense of mankind, we might suppose, would teach all, that these *must* occur from so important a change to the new-born infant; and all anatomical knowledge is a mockery, if they be not founded in truth. Even allowing full weight to the scientific objections that have been made, they only prove that there may be cases where the test is not applicable: they cannot affect its *general* validity.

The result, however, in England, of these fluctuations, is not surprising. It has become proverbial there, to say that no female can be convicted of infanticide. And can we suppose that Dr. William Hunter, were he now living, with his love of knowledge and his ardent desire to acquire and diffuse it, would be satisfied with the construction put upon his writings? Would he not have joined in the general efforts to remove all doubts, by proper inquiries into their value?

The medical witness is often placed in a delicate situation, from the circumstances under which he is summoned. He is a witness for one or other party—for the prosecution, or for the prisoner; and he is so summoned, in the belief that his evidence will favour the side by which he is produced. It would be desirable, that at least the person who has made the previous examination before the coroner's jury, should be divested of this, so far as to enable him to give a full and fair statement of all the circumstances that make for either side. I am aware that he can now do so, and indeed his oath obliges him to it. He ought to put the judge and jury in possession of the "*whole truth*," even if he be not questioned to that extent.† But often the technicalities of an examination, and particularly by an adverse counsel, overcome that self possession which is so essential. Pressed by perplexing questions, and probably irritated in his feelings, he is apt to make declarations more strongly corroborative of opinions that he has formerly

* "The pulmonary test (says Ristelhueber) is no longer a simple trial whether the lungs are buoyant or not, though this phenomenon is of high importance and great value in the estimate, but it consists moreover in examining the thorax, the lungs, and indeed every part that undergoes a change in consequence of respiration." (*Rapports et Consultations de Médecine Légale, par J. Ristelhueber, p. 140.*)

† G. Smith's *Forensic Medicine*, p. 8, 1st edition.

advanced; and as his examination advances, he may incur the charge of being *biassed*, more than facts will warrant.

Would not this difficulty be avoided, by having the written report to which I have referred, presented to the court, as the *medical facts in the case*? The examiner before the coroner's jury will always have time to prepare this deliberately and cautiously; he can state in it his doubts, and mention the circumstances which are favourable or unfavourable to the accused person. *He can avoid all imputations of being a partisan*; and having once signed it as his deliberate opinion, he ought, of course, not to be allowed to alter or amend without showing the most satisfactory reasons.

We have now supposed the facts to be settled. The next difficulty that may occur, is the difference of *opinion* that unfortunately too often arises in courts of justice between members of our profession. They disagree on the bearing and weight of certain facts, and on the deduction to be drawn from them. The most common cause of this, in my judgment, is *the delivery of testimony as to the facts viva voce*. That class of witnesses who are called upon to give opinions on a certain statement of facts, have generally been unable to examine it before the trial. They often hear it imperfectly, sometimes confusedly; and at all events, even if detailed in a succinct and clear manner, they have but a few moments to reflect on its various import, before they are called to decide upon its relevancy. Another circumstance must not be forgotten; and that is, the want of knowledge in one or the other witness. It is seldom that you can find any two persons who are equally skilled on a subject; and so it is here: *one is ignorant in comparison with the other*.

Both these would certainly be greatly obviated by having the written reports to which I have adverted, as the basis on which to found their opinions. These could be examined with deliberation, and the objections offered would then bear the impress of due reflection.

But allowing that all this could be effected, differences will still exist. How are these to be decided? The rule of law is applicable, with proper explanations. "When a witness (says

Starkie) testifies to a fact, which is wholly or partially the result of reason upon particular circumstances, it is obvious that the reasons of the witness for drawing that conclusion are of the most essential importance, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the conclusion was a correct one; and these observations apply with peculiar force to all questions of skill and science.”*

If we carry out this principle, we shall find that all practitioners are not proper witnesses. In a case where anatomical knowledge is particularly necessary to elucidate the case, most importance should be attached to the opinion of him who has cultivated that science. When any question relating to the treatment or symptoms of disease is agitated, he should be consulted whose opportunities are extensive, and whose judgment is approved. So also with other departments of our science. The regrets of John Hunter are a lesson to all of us. Standing at the height of his profession, and to which he had been elevated by the force of genius alone—eminent as an anatomist and physiologist, he was summoned in 1780 as a witness on the remarkable trial of Captain Donellan, for poisoning his brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton. Although he evinced great knowledge, yet, says Sir Astley Cooper, “He regretted that he had not made more experiments on the subject of poisons, before giving an opinion in a court of justice. He found himself a good deal embarrassed, and he used to express his regret publicly in his lectures, that he had not given more attention to the subject before he ventured to give an opinion in a court of justice.”†

It is evident that the difference of opinion originates, in most cases, from a want of knowledge in one or the other. “Doctors will differ,” says Dr. Smith; “but medical jurists cannot differ.”‡ The expression is too strong, but it is far

* Starkie on Evidence, vol. 1, p. 460. It is important also to recollect, that when “scientific men are called as witnesses, they are not entitled to give their opinions as to the *merits of the case*, but only as to the *facts proved on the trial*.” (*Jameson v. Drinkald*, 2 Moore’s Reports, p. 128.)

† Lectures, in the *Lancet*, vol. 3, p. 171.

‡ Introductory Lecture, 1829, p. 23. Dr. Smith entertained for some years a favourite plan of the medical witnesses on a trial consulting together, and agreeing on the substance of the testimony to be given by them. He was once arguing in support of this, when he was put *all aback* by the remark, “*You must also agree on the*

from incorrect. Look at the works of our most approved authors on surgery—on midwifery—on chemistry, and observe on how many points they agree, and on how few comparatively they differ. Accordingly, when the nature of a mineral poison is the subject before a criminal court, we are not to place the evidence of an individual who has only attended a course of lectures on chemistry, and possibly not even that, against one who has made that science his study. Let men of equal standing be confronted, and do not weaken the hands of justice, by neglecting their services in a prosecution, when they are certain of being summoned on the defence to break down testimony that is already falling to pieces through its own imperfection and incorrectness.*

Doubtless there is too little discrimination exercised in receiving all who are called *doctors*, as witnesses. In England, not only physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, beyond whom it should not be extended, but hospital dressers, students, and quacks have been permitted to act as medical witnesses. "We could point out a case of poisoning, (say the Editors of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*,) where the most essential part of the evidence depended on the testimony of a quack alone, and it was admitted."†

When medical men, deserving that title by their knowledge and learning, meet as witnesses, they owe it to their own characters, and the honor of the profession, to treat each other with respect. Even if opposed in sentiment, they may still express themselves with courtesy, and with a due regard to their respective reputations. If they do not guard these, others will with pleasure join in the work of depreciation.‡

questions to be propounded by counsel in their cross examinations." (*Lancet*, N. S. vol. 7, p. 421.)

* In another place, (*Hints on the Examination of Medical Witnesses*,) Dr. Gordon Smith suggests that a proper preliminary question would be to ask the medical witness, Whether he has studied medical jurisprudence; and if not, what is his opinion of the science? It is well insisted on in the *North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, (vol. 3, p. 171,) as a principle in medical evidence never to be lost sight of, that the opinion of one man of acknowledged ability and skill, should outweigh a mass of negative testimony delivered by those who are known to be inferior in knowledge.

† *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 19, p. 610.

‡ I quote two cases, one of which illustrates the *cruelty* which practitioners sometimes exercise towards each other, while the other is worthy of its excellent and kind

The practice in the Scotch courts is somewhat peculiar, and I therefore quote it in detail.

hearted narrator. "A surgeon had reduced a dislocation of a child's elbow, for which the father resisted payment, on the ground that the injury was merely a sprain, and that the charge was excessive. To recover his fee, the practitioner brought an action. The ordinary medical attendant of the defendant's family *saw the arm on the following day, accidentally, and in his opinion there was no dislocation.*"

"Sir Wm. Blizard, who had already spoken in favour of the plaintiff's character and professional qualifications, was again examined upon this point, and very properly discountenanced such an inference—stating that it was *impossible for any one, after twenty-four hours, to say whether a dislocation had taken place or not, if it had been properly treated.*" (London Medical Repository, vol. 21, p. 264.)

Mr. Abernethy states the following in his lectures. His characteristic manner would seem to be preserved in the report. "A medical man was prosecuted for killing a child by giving it opium, at least that was said. I happened to be in the country at the time, and was strongly solicited by him to attend and give my opinion. I considered that the character of the profession was at stake, and although rather against my inclination, I went. After waiting in a crowded court the greatest part of the day, I was called upon, and placed in the witness box. The lawyers had taken it into their heads that the child had died from maltreatment on the part of the surgeon; the child had been scalded severely, and he had given opium, and they thought they should be able to make the jury think as they did. The first question put to me was, 'Mr. Abernethy will you inform us what is considered the proper treatment for scalds?' This was a question broad enough to be sure; I was puzzled a little how to answer it; I did not know but that they would require a lecture on burns and scalds. I considered a minute, and then said, 'That which was adopted in the present case.' Oh! that was what they did not expect; it was giving a turn to the case which they did not like. 'You have heard the evidence, have you not?' 'Yes, but it is contradictory.' 'But judging from the evidence?' 'I have no right to judge; you may judge if you please, or the jury may judge, but I shall not.'—'But I ask you, for the information of the jury, your opinion respecting the opium, whether you do not consider it too large a quantity for a child?' 'The statements respecting the opium have been contradictory, but admitting that the child had, as was said, eight drops immediately after the accident, and ten drops two hours after, I should say that the child had not taken one drop too much.' 'But are you aware that the child had no pain?' 'Yes, perfectly; when the skin, or any other part of the body is severely injured, the nervous system of the part is so affected that the peculiar actions of the nerves on the brain or spinal marrow, by which alone pain can be felt, do not take place. A man may have a serious injury inflicted by a mechanical cause, may have his leg smashed, and nearly torn off by machinery, and yet feel little or no pain; and we are in the habit of giving, in such cases, wine and opium, not to act as a narcotic, but to arouse the energies of the vital powers, and call them again into exercise; the nervous system has sustained a great shock, from which it requires to be roused.' The judge said, 'that he understood it, he saw the principle on which the treatment was founded, and had no doubt but it was correct.' 'But, my lord,' said the counsel, 'the child slept to death.' 'So he may have appeared to sleep, but he would have done so, if no opium had been given; it was the torpid state into which the nervous system had fallen, which caused that appearance, and from which the child could not be roused.' Here the business rested, the treatment was admitted to be correct, and the character of the gentleman exculpated." (Lancet, vol. 6, p. 229.)

In some cases, medical witnesses have met with deserved reproof. On the trial of Donnal, Mr. Ticknor, a surgeon, was asked, "Supposing a person to have retchings and purgings for several hours, and that you found these attended with a frequent and fluttering pulse, in that state of the illness, what should you have prescribed? *Ans.* I should have prescribed diametrically opposite to the prescription of Dr. Edwards. I should consider that prescribed by Dr. Edwards, as adding weight to a porter's back."

"Witnesses are not allowed to remain in court to hear the deposition of other witnesses, but in this there is an exception in the case of medical witnesses, who should remain to hear the deposition of the witnesses who depose to the facts of the case; but they should be examined on matters of medical opinion apart from each other. This mode of being in court applies only to medical witnesses who are to give a *professional opinion, properly so called*. If they are examined as to the facts in the case, they must be enclosed as other witnesses."

"Though the medical witnesses who are to give a professional opinion, should hear the whole *facts* of the case detailed by the other witnesses, whether professional or ordinary, who are examined in the cause, yet it is usual when one medical man begins to give an opinion on the case to cause the other medical men to retire. The reason of this is, that it has been found by experience, that medical men, even of experience and information, are generally so prone to contradict each other, or to adhere to the side on which they are cited, that it is never safe to let them hear each other's testimony. The proper way to do, therefore, is to allow the medical men who are to be examined as to opinion, to hear the whole evidence relating to the facts, whether from the ordinary or the medical witnesses, and to remove them as soon as medical opinion is about to commence."

"It is not yet settled, whether, when one medical man contradicts another, on a point of opinion, it is competent to re-examine the first, in order to clear up the difficulty. In a late case, this point occurred. Lords Gillies and Meadowbank were for admitting the re-examination, and the Lords Justice

Mr. JUSTICE ABBOT, (afterwards Lord Tenterden,) to the witness. "Dont speak metaphorically: you are speaking just now of a gentleman of experience and respectability. I dont wish you to conceal your opinion, but only to speak it in different language." (Paris and Fonblanque's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. 3, appendix, p. 304.)

In another case, mentioned in the printed lectures of Mr. Amos, a medical man at Lincoln flippantly replied to a question, by slighting the information which was to be obtained from medical writers, saying that the writers of books would advance any thing. Chief Justice Dallas reprimanded the witness, and remarked, that he would not sit in a court of justice and hear science reviled, and the recorded researches of the medical world represented by ignorant tongues as leading only to uncertainty. (London Medical and Surgical Journal, (Dr. Thomson's Lectures,) vol. 6, p. 421.)

Clerk and Hermand against it. The examination in these circumstances was not pressed by the crown."*

But *personal experience*, however comprehensive it may be, cannot always be satisfactory, nor indeed sufficient. It has then been a subject of considerable discussion whether *authority*, or in other words, the observations of others, should be adduced as testimony. There appears to be no settled rule on this subject, although certainly some judges have decided against its introduction. When Dr. Neale, on the trial of Donnal for poisoning, quoted Thenard, whose work on chemistry is as much authority with physicians as Starkie and Phillips are with lawyers, Judge Abbot said, "We cannot take the fact from any publication; we cannot take the fact as related by any stranger."† So also on the famous trial of Spencer Cowper, when some of the witnesses referred to medical authors on the subject of drowning, it was objected to by the bench. The expostulation of Dr. Crell on this deserves repetition. "My Lord (said he) it must be reading, as well as a man's own experience, that will make any one a physician; for without the reading of books in that art, the art itself cannot be attained to. I humbly conceive, that in such a difficult case as this, we ought to have a great deference for the reports and opinions of learned men; neither do I see any reason why I should not quote the fathers of my profession in this case, as well as you gentlemen of the long robe quote Coke upon Littleton in others."‡ It is well to add that he was allowed to proceed.

On the other hand, in order to show that the doctrine of exclusion is not fully established, I need only allude to the frequent mention made by judges themselves of the writings of Dr. William Hunter. Surely, if these be authority, the works of other eminent men are equally so.

In this country, I believe the objection has never been made.

* Alison's Practice of the Criminal Law of Scotland, p. 542, &c.

† Paris and Fonblanque, vol. 3, appendix, p. 299.

‡ Hargrave's State Trials. "It appears to us that no witness could follow this advice (to shun quoting authorities,) without compromising the right and dignity of his profession, as well as the force of his evidence, for it would not be difficult to show that medical evidence altogether is little else than a reference to authority." (Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 480.)

There is scarcely a case of any note, where medical testimony has been required, in which frequent reference has not been had to medical works. They are quoted and commented upon by the bench, the bar, and the professional witnesses.

"The practice of the English judges in excluding a reference to authors, evidently arises from the principle in law, that nothing is evidence which is not delivered upon oath. But is an oath more binding than the solemn act of sincerity between the author and the world, by the very act of publication? Would Paris and Fonblanque be better authority, if they swore to it before the twelve judges? And is it not manifest, that if the exclusion be made to act systematically, it must inevitably end in excluding medical and scientific evidence altogether? For scientific inquiries at law can scarcely be any thing else than a tissue of references to written authorities. Of what use would be all the personal experience of any physician, unless he knew, by referring to that of his predecessors, the conclusions he is entitled to draw from it?"*

I must not refrain from mentioning, that the responsibility of the physician is often greatly increased by the mode of the examination. "A dexterous advocate (as has been well remarked) has a great advantage over any witness, however learned or self possessed. He may be led into a train of admissions, the inferences from which are afterwards to be turned against him."† Many of these undoubtedly originate from inquiries into the import of *individual facts*, instead of the *whole collectively*. The consequences of such attempts may be easily conceived. "In a vast majority of cases, for example, in all cases of insanity, infanticide and poisoning, the witness may be made to express the very opposite of his real opinion."‡

If the duties on which I have enlarged are important to the community, in promoting the proper administration of justice, ought not the individuals engaged in them to receive adequate

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 610.

† Gordon Smith on Medical Evidence. p. 42.

‡ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 19, p. 611. The difficulties attending this have induced some to advise that *no opinion* should be given, and to refuse it when asked; but I cannot well see how an answer is to be evaded, except by pleading ignorance.

compensation? I advert to this, not only because it is just in principle, but because it would remove all imputations of volunteering in criminal cases. No one can refuse being a witness when legally summoned; every one, I presume, may decline the dissection of a dead body, or the chemical examination of a suspected fluid; and yet there is not, I believe, an individual attending on any of our courts, who is not paid for his time and services, with the exception of such as are engaged in these investigations.*

There remain two points, of which it is proper to apprise the medical witness.

One is, that he may be called upon to divulge *secrets* entrusted to him in professional confidence. It was solemnly decided in the case of the Dutchess of Kingston, that in a court of justice, medical men are bound to divulge these secrets, when required to do so. In a recent case, where a female was indicted for the murder of her infant child, Mr. Cozzens, the surgeon, was called to prove certain confessions made by her to him. He objected, on the ground that he was, when she made her statement, attending her as a surgeon. But Justice Park observed that this was not a sufficient reason to prevent a disclosure for the purpose of justice, and he was ordered to answer, but the prisoner was acquitted on other grounds.†

The law in France is of an opposite description. The Penal Code, Art. 378, directs, that if physicians, surgeons, officers of health, and also apothecaries, midwives, and all other persons, depositaries of secrets, either through their condition or profession, shall reveal these secrets, (except in cases where the law obliges them,) they shall be punished with fine and

* By a decision in England, (*Severn v. Olive*,) the expenses of *experiments* to elucidate or determine points in dispute, cannot be allowed in costs. This (says Dr. Paris) may be a check to prevent intelligent practitioners from attending. (*Medical Jurisprudence*, vol. 1, p. 157.)

In France, every medical man summoned by legal authority to make a medico-legal report, receives fees fixed by law. (Hubert, *Manuel des Lois et Réglemens sur les études et l'exercice des diverses parties de la Médecine*. 18mo. Paris, 1826. p. 133.)

In Ireland, by an act (10 George IV. chap. 37,) passed June 4, 1829, the coroner is empowered to remunerate medical witnesses, attending inquests pursuant to summons, to any amount not exceeding £5, by an order, to be paid by the treasurer of the county or city where such inquests are held.

† 1 Carrington and Payne's Reports, p. 97. *Rex v. Gibbons*.

imprisonment; and in another place, it is clearly indicated that the exception has reference to crimes that *put the safety of the state at hazard*.*

Deathbed declarations must be made under the apprehension of impending death. It is not essential that the party should apprehend *immediate* dissolution—it is sufficient if he apprehend it to be impending; and under such circumstances, these declarations, if made to the medical attendant, or any other person, are received as valid testimony. But the “person making them must entertain no hopes of recovery.” On the trial of Mr. Christie and Mr. Trail, for the murder of Mr. John Scott, the editor of the London Magazine, and author of various works, in a duel, Dr. Darling, who had attended the deceased after he had received his wound, deposed that he heard Mr. Scott on his deathbed say—*Mr. Justice Bailey*. Did Mr. Scott at that time think himself in danger; did he give up all hopes of recovery? *Dr. Darling*. No; to the last he entertained hopes of recovery. *Mr. Justice Bailey*. The declaration made by a dying man cannot be received as evidence, unless the party at the time of making it were satisfied that recovery is impossible.†

I will close this chapter by a single quotation. Although it refers to another country, yet physicians should understand that in our own, the legal profession is paying great attention to Medical Jurisprudence. How imperative then the duty of fitting themselves as medical witnesses!

“Medical practitioners should be aware that all the rising “barristers of our courts attend lectures on legal medicine, “and often does forensic fame arise from the ability with “which an advocate examines a medical witness.”‡

* Briand's Manuel, p. 499, 2d edition.

† Starkie on Evidence, vol. 2, p. 460. Ryan, p. 301. Paris and Fonblanque, vol. 1, p. 166.

‡ Ryan, Preface, p. ix.

CATALOGUE OF BOOKS REFERRED TO.

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* I quote this work, for the purpose of stating that it is a wholesale robbery of Dr. Paris's treatise and my own. Indeed the reprint is so exact, that on one page, (p. 344.) Mr. Forsyth quotes the *American* edition of Baillie's Anatomy!!

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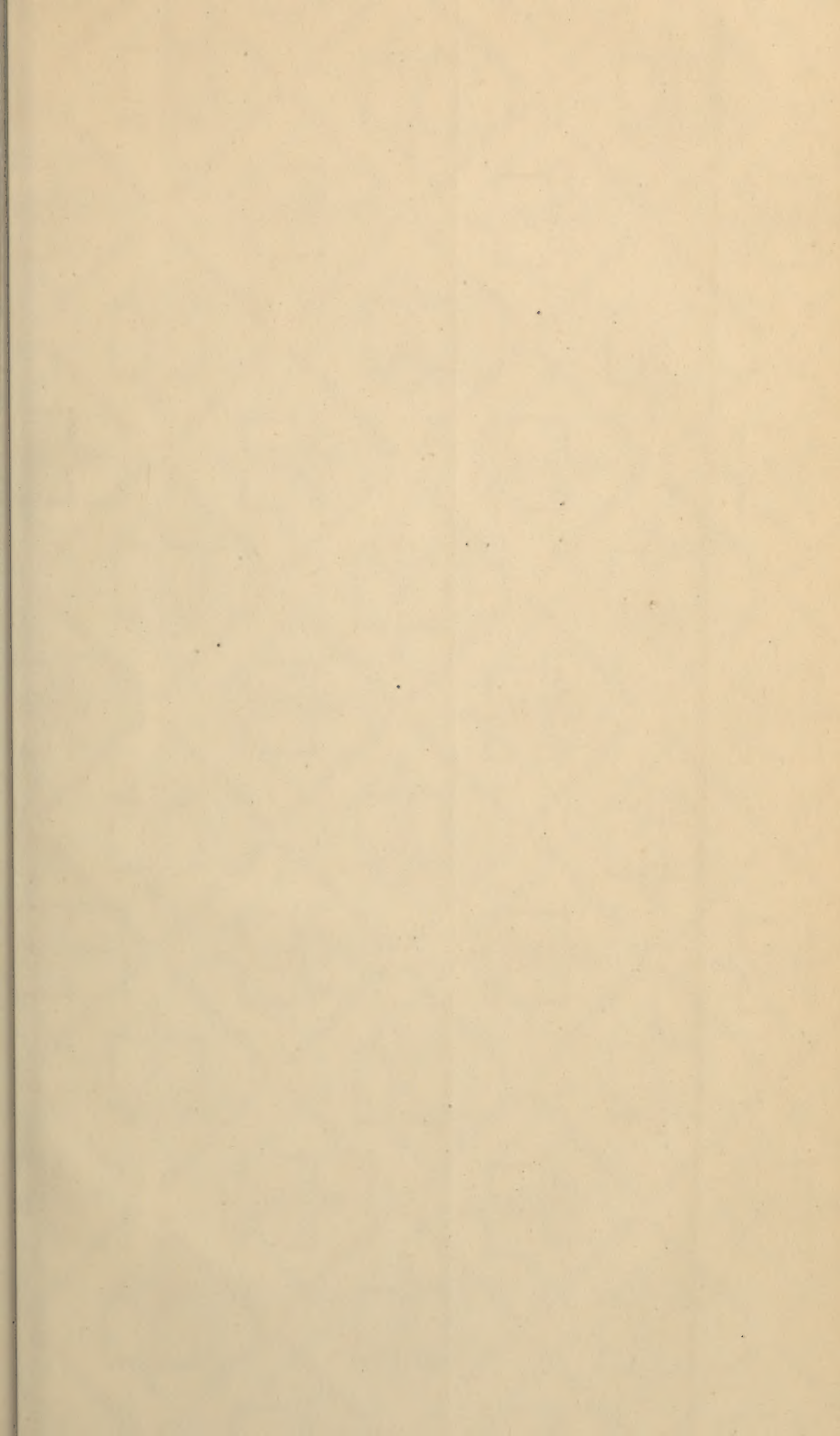
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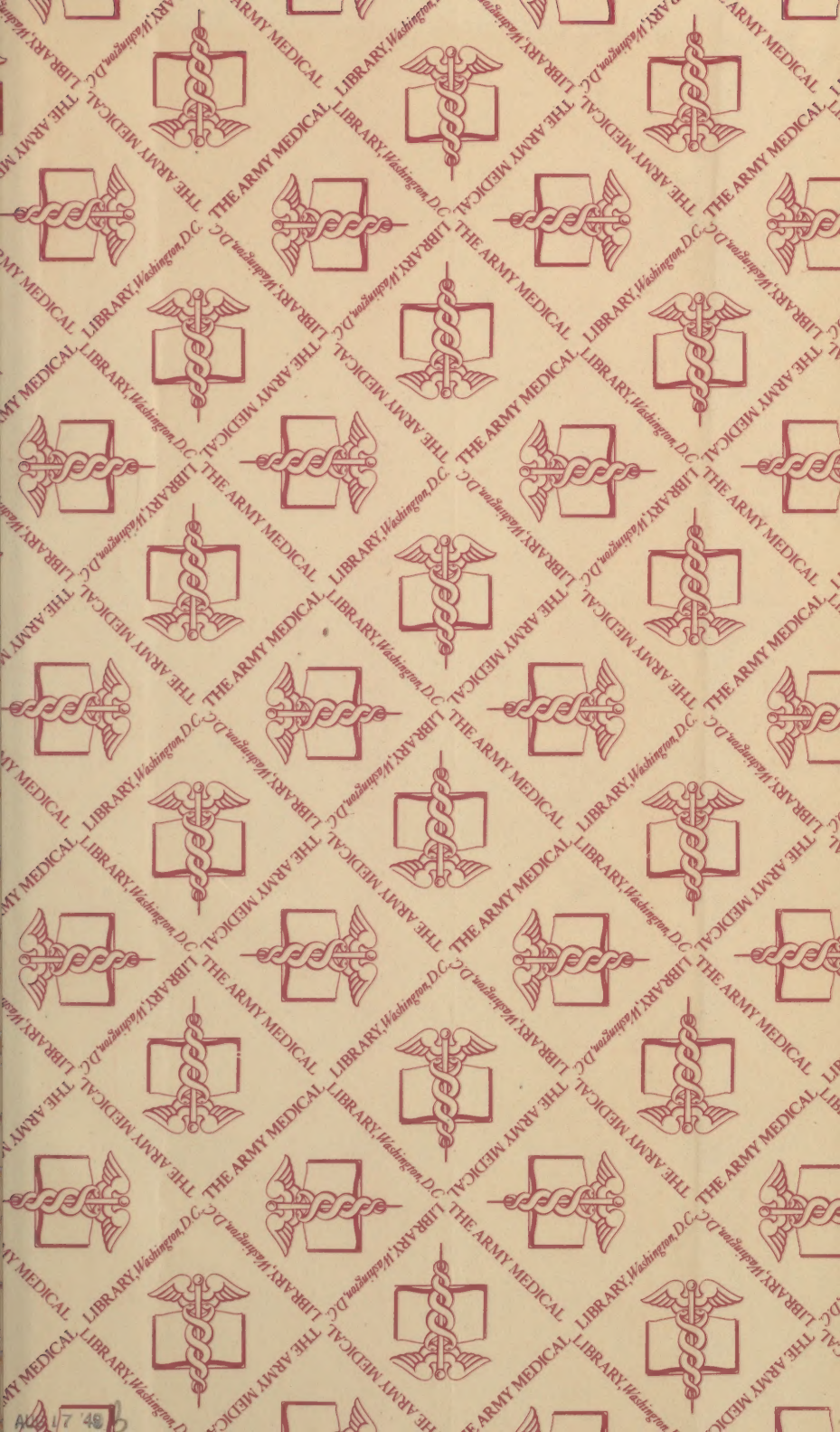
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